













THE RECREATIONS OF A  
COUNTRY PARSON.

SECOND SERIES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### CONCERNING THE PARSON'S CHOICE BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

ONE very happy circumstance in a clergyman's lot, is that he is saved from painful perplexity as regards his choice of the scene in which he is to spend his days and years. I am sorry for the man who returns from Australia with a large fortune; and with no further end in life than to settle down somewhere and enjoy it. For in most cases he has no special tie to any particular place; and he must feel very much perplexed where to go. Should any person who may read this page cherish the purpose of leaving me a hundred thousand pounds to invest in a pretty little estate, I beg that he will at once abandon such a design. He would be doing me no kindness. I should be entirely bewildered in trying to make up my mind where I should purchase the property. I should be rent asunder by conflicting visions of rich English landscape, and heathery Scottish hills: of



seaside breezes, and inland meadows: of horse-chestnut avenues, and dark stern pine-woods. And after the estate had been bought, I should always be looking back and thinking I might have done better. So, on the whole, I would prefer that my reader should himself buy the estate, and bequeath it to me: and then I could soon persuade myself that it was the prettiest estate and the pleasantest neighbourhood in Britain.

Now, as a general rule, the Great Disposer says to the parson, Here is your home, here lies your work through life: go and reconcile your mind to it, and do your best in it. No doubt there are men in the Church whose genius, popularity, influence, or luck is such, that they have a bewildering variety of livings pressed upon them: but it is not so with ordinary folk;—and certainly it was not so with me. I went where Providence bade me go, which was not where I had wished to go, and not where I had thought to go. Many who know me through the pages which make this and a preceding volume have said, written, and printed, that I was specially cut out for a country parson, and specially adapted to relish a quiet country life. Not more, believe me, reader, than yourself. It is in every man who sets himself to it to attain the self-same characteristics. It is quite true I have these now: but, a few years since, never was mortal less like them. No cockney set down near Sydney Smith, at Foston-le-Clay: no

fish, suddenly withdrawn from its native stream : could feel more strange and cheerless than did I when I went to my beautiful country parish, where I have spent such happy days, and which I have come to love so much.

I have said that the parson is for the most part saved the labour of determining where he shall pitch his tent : his place and his path in life are marked out for him. But he has his own special perplexity and labour : quite different from those of the man to whom the hundred thousand pounds to invest in land are bequeathed : still, as some perhaps would think, no less hard. His work is to reconcile his mind to the place where God has set him. Every mortal must, in many respects, face one of these two trials. There is all the world before you, where to choose ; and then the struggle to make a decided choice, with which you shall on reflection remain entirely satisfied. Or there is no choice at all : the Hand above gives you your place and your work ; and then there is the struggle heartily and cheerfully to acquiesce in the decree as to which you were not consulted.

And this is not always an easy thing ; though I am sure that the man who honestly and christianly tries to do it, will never fail to succeed at last. How curiously people are set down in the Church ; and indeed in all other callings whatsoever ! You find men in the last places they would have chosen ; in the

last places for which you would say they are suited. You pass a pretty country church, with its parsonage hard-by embosomed in trees and bright with roses. Perhaps the parson of that church had set his heart on an entirely different kind of charge; perhaps he is a disappointed man, eager to get away, and (the very worst possible policy) trying for every vacancy of which he can hear. You think, as you pass by, and sit down on the churchyard wall, how happy you could be in so quiet and sweet a spot: well, if you are willing to do a thing, it is pleasant: but if you are struggling with a chain you cannot break, it is miserable. The pleasantest thing becomes painful, if it is felt as a restraint. What can be cosier than the warm environment of sheet and blanket which encircles you in your snug bed? Yet if you awake during the night at some alarm of peril, and by a sudden effort try at once to shake yourself clear of these trammels, you will, for the half-minute before you succeed, feel that soft restraint as irksome as iron fetters. 'Let your will lead whither necessity would drive,' said Locke, 'and you will always preserve your liberty.' No doubt, it is wise advice; but how to do all that?

Well, it can be done: but it costs an effort. Great part of the work of the civilised and educated man consists of that which the savage, and even the uneducated man, would not regard as work at all. The things which cost the greatest effort may be

done; perhaps, as you sit in an easy chair with your eyes shut. And such an effort is that of *making up our mind* to many things, both in our own lot; and in the lot of others. I mean not merely the intellectual effort to look at the success of other men and our own failure in such a way as that we shall be intellectually convinced that we have no right to complain of either: I do not mean merely the labour to put things in the right point of view: but the moral effort to look fairly at the facts not in any way disguised,—not tricked out by some skilful *art of putting things*;—and yet to repress all wrong feeling;—all fretfulness, envy, jealousy, dislike, hatred. I do not mean, to persuade ourselves that the grapes are sour; but (far nobler surely) to be well aware that they are sweet, and yet be content that another should have them, and not we. I mean the labour, when you have run in a race and been beaten, to resign your mind to the fact that you have been beaten, and to bear a kind feeling towards the man who beat you. And this is labour, and hard labour; though very different from that physical exertion which the uncivilised man would understand by the word. Every one can understand that to carry a heavy portmanteau a mile is work. Not every one remembers that the owner of the portmanteau, as he walks on carrying nothing weightier than an umbrella, may be going through exertion much harder than that of the porter. Probably St. Paul never spent

days of harder work in all his life, than the days he spent lying blind at Damascus; struggling to get free from the prejudices and convictions of all his past years, and resolving on the course he would pursue in the years to come.

I know that in all professions and occupations to which men can devote themselves, there is such a thing as competition : and wherever there is competition, there will be the temptation to envy, jealousy, and detraction, as regards a man's competitors : and so there will be the need of that labour and exertion which lie in resolutely trampling that temptation down. You are quite certain, my friend, as you go on through life, to have to make up your mind to failure and disappointment on your own part, and to seeing other men preferred before you. When these things come, there are two ways of meeting them. One is, to hate and vilify those who surpass you, either in merit or in success : to detract from their merit and under-rate their success : or, if you must admit some merit, to bestow upon it very faint praise. Now, all this is natural enough ; but assuredly it is neither a right nor a happy course to follow. The other and better way is, to fight these tendencies to the death : to struggle against them, to pray against them : to resign yourself to God's good will : to admire and love the man who beats you. This course is the right one, and the happy one. I believe the greatest blessing God can send a man, is

disappointment, rightly met and used. There is no more ennobling discipline: there is no discipline that results in a happier or kindlier temper of mind. And in honestly fighting against the evil impulses which have been mentioned, you will assuredly get help and strength to vanquish them. I have seen the plain features look beautiful, when man or woman was faithfully by God's grace resisting wrong feelings and tendencies, such as these. It is a noble end to attain, and it is well worth all the labour it costs, to resolutely be resigned, cheerful, and kind, when you feel a strong inclination to be discontented, moody, and bitter of heart. Well said a very wise mortal, 'Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' And that ruling of the spirit which is needful to rightly meet disappointment, brings out the best and noblest qualities that can be found in man.

Sometimes, indeed, even in the parson's quiet life, he may know something of the first perplexity of which we have been thinking: the perplexity of the man who is struggling to make up his mind where he is to settle down for the remainder of life. And it is not long since such a perplexity came my way. For I had reached a spot in my onward path at which I must make a decided choice. I must go either to the right or the left: for, as Goldsmith has remarked with great force, when the road you are pursuing parts into several roads, you must be

careful to follow only one. And I had to decide between country and town, I had to resolve whether I was to remain in that quiet cure of souls about which I formerly told you; or go into the hard work and hurry of a large parish in a certain great city.

I had been for more than five years in that sweet country place: it seemed a very long time as the days passed over. • Even slow-growing ivy grew feet longer in that time, and climbing roses covered yards and yards of wall. And for very many months I thought that here I was to live and die, and never dreamt of change. Not indeed that my tastes were always such. At the beginning of that term of years, when I went down each Sunday morning to preach in the plain little church to a handful of quiet rustic people, I used to think of a grand edifice where once upon a time, at my first start in my profession, I had preached each afternoon for many months to a very large congregation of educated folk; and I used to wonder whether my old friends remembered and missed me. Once there was to me a fascination about that grand church, and all connected with it: now it is to me no more than it is to every one else, and I pass near it almost every day and hardly look at it. Other men have taken my old place in it, and had the like feelings, and got over them. Several of these men I never saw: how much I should like to shake each man's hand!

But all these fancies were long, long ago : I was pleased to be a country parson, and to make the best of it. Friends, who have held like stations in life, have you not felt, now and then, a little waking up of old ideas and aspirations ? All this, you thought, was not what you once had wished, and pictured to yourself. You vainly fancied, in your student days, that you might reach a more eminent place and greater usefulness. I know, indeed, that even such as have gone very unwillingly to a little remote country parish, have come most heartily to enjoy its peaceful life : have grown fond of that, as they never thought to do. I do not mean that you need affectedly talk, after a few months there, as if you had lived in the country all your life, and as if your thoughts had from childhood run upon horses, turnips, and corn. But in sober earnest, as weeks pass over, you gain a great interest in little country cares ; and you discover that you may be abundantly useful, and abundantly laborious, amid a small and simple population.

Yet, sometimes, my clever friend, I know you sit down on a green bank, under the trees, and look at your little church. You think of your companions and competitors in College days, filling distinguished places in life : and, more particularly, of this and that friend in your own calling, who preaches to as many people on one Sunday as you do in half a year. Fine fellows they were : and though you seldom



meet now, you are sure they are faithful, laborious, able, and devoted ministers : God bless them all ! You wonder how they can do so much work ; and especially how they have confidence to preach to so large and intelligent congregations. For a certain timidity, and distrust of his own powers, grows upon the country parson. He is reaching the juster estimate of himself, indeed : yet there is something not desirable in the nervous dislike to preach in large churches and to cultivated people which is sure to come. And little things worry him, which would not worry a mind kept more upon the stretch. It is possible enough that among the Cumberland hills, or in curacies like Sydney Smith's on Salisbury Plain, or wandering sadly by the shore of Shetland fiords, there may be men who had in them the makings of eminent preachers ; but whose powers have never been called out, and are rusting sadly away : and in whom many petty cares are developing a pettiness of nature.

I have observed that in those advertisements which occasionally appear in certain newspapers, offering for sale the next presentation to some living in the Church, the advertiser, after pointing out the various advantages of the situation, frequently sums up by stating that the population of the parish is very small, and so the clergyman's duty very light. I always read such a statement with great displeasure. For it seems to imply, that a clergyman's

great object is, to enjoy his benefice and do as little duty as possible in return for it. I suppose it need not be proved, that if such were truly the great object of any parson, he has no business to be in the Church at all. Failing health, or powers over-driven, may sometimes make even the parson whose heart is in his work desire a charge whose duty and responsibility are comparatively small: but I firmly believe that in the case of the great majority of clergymen, it is the interest and delight they feel in their work, and not its worldly emolument, that mainly attach them to their sacred profession: and thus that the more work they have to do (provided their strength be equal to it), the more desirable and interesting they hold their charge to be. And I believe that the earnest pastor, settled in some light and pleasant country charge, will oftentimes, even amid his simple enjoyment of that pleasant life, think that perhaps he would be more in the path of duty, if, while the best years of his life are passing on, he were placed where he might serve his Master in a larger sphere.

And thinking now and then in this fashion, I was all of a sudden asked to undertake a charge such as would once have been my very ideal: and in that noble city where my work began, and so which has always been very dear. But I felt that everything was changed. Before these years of growing experience, I dare say I should not have

feared to set myself even to work as hard ; but now I doubted greatly whether I should prove equal to it. That time in the country had made me sadly lose confidence. And I thought it would be very painful and discouraging to go to preach to a large congregation, and to see it Sunday by Sunday growing less, as people got discontented and dropped away.

But happily, those on whom I leant for guidance and advice, were more hopeful than myself ; and so I came away from my beautiful country parish. You know, my friends, who have passed through the like, the sorrow to look for the last time at each kind homely face : the sorrow to turn away from the little church where you have often preached to very small congregations : the sorrow to leave each tree you have planted, and the evergreens whose growth you have watched, year by year. Soon, you are in all the worry of what in Scotland we call *a flitting* : the house and all its belongings are turned upside down. The kindness of the people comes out with tenfold strength when they know how soon you are to part. And some, to whom you had tried to do little favours, and who had somewhat disappointed you by the slight sense of them they had shown, now testify by their tears a hearty regard which you never can forget.

The Sunday comes when you enter your old pulpit for the last time. You had prepared your

sermon in a room from which the carpet had been removed, and amid a general confusion and noise of packing. The church is crowded in a fashion never seen before. You go through the service, I think, with a sense of being somewhat stunned and bewildered. And in the closing sentences of your sermon, you say little of yourself; but in a few words, very hard to speak, you thank your old friends for their kindness to you through the years you have passed together; and you give them your parting advice, in some sentence which seems to contain the essence of all you meant to teach in all these Sundays; and you say farewell, farewell.

You are happy, indeed, if after all, though quitting your country parsonage, and turning over a new leaf in life, you have not to make a change so entire as that from country to town generally is: if, like me, you live in the most beautiful city in Britain; a city where country and town are blended together: where there are green gardens, fields, and trees: shady places into which you may turn from the glaring streets, into verdure as cool and quiet as ever, and where your little children can roll upon the grass, and string daisies as of old; streets, from every opening in which you look out upon blue hills and blue sea. No doubt, the work is very hard, and very constant; and each Sunday is a very exciting and exhausting day. You will understand, my friend, when you go to such a charge,

what honour is due to those venerable men who have faithfully and efficiently done the duty of the like for thirty or forty years. You will look at them with much interest: you will receive their kindly counsel with great respect. You will feel it somewhat trying and nervous work to ascend your pulpit; and to address men and women who in mental cultivation, and in things much more important, are more than equal to yourself. And as you walk down, always alone, to church each Sunday morning, you will very earnestly apply for strength and wisdom beyond your own, in a certain Quarter where they will never be sought in vain. Yet you will delight in all your duty: and you will thank God you feel that were your work in life to choose again, you would give yourself to the noblest task that can be undertaken by mortal, with a resolute purpose firmer a thousand times than even the enthusiastic preference of your early youth. The attention and sympathy with which your congregation will listen to your sermons, will be a constant encouragement and stimulus; and you will find friends so dear and true, that you will hope never to part from them while life remains. In such a life, indeed, these Essays, which never would have been begun had my duty been always such, must be written in little snatches of time: and perhaps a sharp critic could tell, from internal evidence, which of them have been written in the country, and which in the town. I look up from

the table at which I write : and the roses, honeysuckle, and fuchsias, of a year since, are far away : through the window I discover lofty walls, whose colour inclines to black. Yet I have not regretted the day, and I do not believe I ever will regret the day, when I ceased to be a Country Parson.

## CHAPTER II.

## CONCERNING DISAPPOINTMENT AND SUCCESS.

RUSSET woods of Autumn, here you are once more ! I saw you, golden and brown, in the afternoon sunshine to-day. Crisp leaves were falling, as I went along the foot-path through the woods : crisp leaves lie upon the green graves in the churchyard, fallen from the ashes : and on the shrubby walks, crisp leaves from the beeches, accumulated where the grass bounds the gravel, make a warm edging, irregular, but pleasant to see. It is not that one is ' tired of summer : ' but there is something soothing and pleasing about the autumn days. There is a great clearness of the atmosphere sometimes ; sometimes a subdued, gray light is diffused everywhere. In the country, there is often, on these afternoons, a remarkable stillness in the air, amid which you can hear a withering leaf rustling down. I will not think that the time of bare branches and brown grass is so very near as yet ;

Nature is indeed decaying, but now we have decay only in its beautiful stage, wherein it is pensive, but not sad. It is but early in October; and we, who live in the country all through the winter, please ourselves with the belief that October is one of the finest months of the year, and that we have many warm, bright, still days yet before us. Of course we know we are practising upon ourselves a cheerful, transparent delusion; even as the man of forty-eight often declares that about forty-eight or fifty is the prime of life. I like to remember that Mrs. Hemans was describing October, when she began her beautiful poem on *The Battle of Morgarten*, by saying that 'The wine-month shone in its golden prime:' and I think that in these words the picture presented to the mind of an untravelled Briton, is not the red grapes hanging in blushing profusion, but rather the brown, and crimson, and golden woods, in the warm October sunshine. So, you russet woods of autumn, you are welcome once more; welcome with all your peculiar beauty, so gently enjoyable by all men and women who have not used up life; and with all your lessons, so unobtrusive, so touching, that have come home to the heart of human generations for many thousands of years. Yesterday was Sunday; and I was preaching to my simple rustics an autumn sermon from the text *We all do fade as a leaf*. As I read out the text, through a half-opened window near me, two



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large withered oak-leaves silently floated into the little church in the view of all the congregation. I could not but pause for a minute till they should preach their sermon before I began mine. How simply, how unaffectedly, with what natural pathos they seemed to tell their story ! It seemed as if they said, Ah you human beings, something besides us is fading ; here we are, the things like which *you* fade !

And now, upon this evening, a little sobered by the thought that this is the fourth October which has seen this hand writing that which shall attain the authority of print, I sit down to begin an essay which is to be written leisurely, as recreation and not as work. I need not finish this essay, unless I choose, for six weeks to come : so I have plenty of time, and I shall never have to write under pressure. *That* is pleasant. And I write under another feeling, more pleasing and encouraging still. I think that in these lines I am addressing many unknown friends, who, though knowing nothing more of me than they can learn from pages which I have written, have come gradually not to think of me as a stranger. I wish here to offer my thanks to many whose letters, though they were writing only to a shadow, have spoken in so kindly a fashion of the writer's slight productions, that they have given me much enjoyment in the reading, and much encouragement to go on. To all my correspondents, whether named or

nameless, I now, in a moral sense, extend a friendly hand. As to the question sometimes put, who the writer is, *that* is of no consequence. But as to what he is, I think, intelligent readers of his essays, you will gradually and easily see *that*.

It is a great thing to write leisurely, and with a general feeling of kindness and satisfaction with everybody; but there is a further reason why one should set to work at once. I feel I must write now, before my subject loses its interest; and before the multitude of thoughts, such as they are, which have been clustering round it since it presented itself this afternoon in that walk through the woods, have faded away. It is an unhappy thing, but it is the fact with many men, that if you do not seize your fancies when they come to you, and preserve them upon the written page, you lose them altogether. They go away, and never come back. A little while ago I pulled out a drawer in this table whereon I write; and I took out of it a sheet of paper, on which there are written down various subjects for essays. Several are marked with a large cross: these are the essays which are beyond the reach of fate; they are written and printed. Several others have no cross; these are the subjects of essays which are yet to be written. But upon four of those subjects I look at once with interest and sorrow. I remember when I wrote down their names, what a vast amount, as I fancied, I had to say about them:

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and all experience failed to make me feel that unless those thoughts were seized and chronicled at once, they would go away and never come back again. How rich the subjects appeared to me, I well remember ! Now they are lifeless, stupid things, of which it is impossible to make anything. Before, they were like a hive, buzzing with millions of bees. Now they are like the empty hive, when the life and stir and bustle of the bees are gone. O friendly reader, what a loss it was to you, that the writer did not at once sit down and sketch out his essays, *Concerning Things Slowly Learnt* ; and *Concerning Growing Old* ! And two other subjects of even greater value were, *Concerning the Practical Effect of Illogical Reasons*, and *An Estimate of the Practical Influence of False Assertions*. How the hive was buzzing when these titles were written down : but now I really hardly remember anything of what I meant to say, and what I remember appears wretched stuff. The effervescence has gone from the champagne ; it is flat and dead. Still, it is possible that these subjects may recover their interest ; and the author hereby gives notice that he reserves the right of producing an essay upon each of them. Let no one else infringe his vested claims.

There is one respect in which I have often thought that there is a curious absence of analogy between the moral and the material worlds. You are in a great excitement about something or other ; you are

immensely interested in reaching some aim ; you are extremely angry and ferocious at some piece of conduct ; let us suppose. Well, the result is that you cannot take a sound, clear, temperate view of the circumstances ; you cannot see the case rightly ; you actually do see it very wrongly. You wait till a week or a month passes ; till some distance, in short, intervenes between you and the matter ; and then your excitement, your fever, your wrath, have gone down, as the matter has lost its freshness ; and now you see the case calmly, you see it very differently indeed from the fashion in which you saw it first ; you conclude that now you see it rightly. One can think temperately now of the atrocities of the mutineers in India. It does not now quicken your pulse to think of them. You have not now the burning desire you once felt, to take a sepoy by the throat and cut him to pieces with a cat-of-nine-tails. The common consent of mankind has decided that you have now attained the right view. I ask, is it certain that in all cases the second thought is the best ;—is the *right* thought, as well as the *calmest* thought ? Would it be just to say (which would be the material analogy) that you have the best view of some great rocky island when you have sailed away from it till it has turned to a blue cloud on the horizon ; rather than when its granite and heather are full in view, close at hand ? I am not sure that in every case the calmer thought is the right thought, the distant

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view the right view. You have come to think indifferently of the personal injury, of the act of foul cruelty and falsehood, which once roused you to flaming indignation. Are you thinking rightly too? Or has not just such an illusion been practised upon your mental view, as is played upon your bodily eye when looking over ten miles of sea upon Staffa? You do not see the basaltic columns now; but *that* is because you see wrongly. You do not burn at the remembrance of the wicked lie, the crafty misrepresentation, the cruel blow; but perhaps you ought to do so. And now (to speak of less grave matters) when all I had to say about *Growing Old* seems very poor, do I see it rightly? Do I see it as my reader would always have seen it? Or has it faded into falsehood, as well as into distance and dimness? When I look back, and see my thoughts as trash, is it because they *are* trash and no better? When I look back, and see Ailsa as a cloud, is it because it *is* a cloud and nothing more? Or is it, as I have already suggested, that in one respect the analogy between the moral and the material fails?

I am going to write *Concerning Disappointment and Success*. In the days when I studied metaphysics, I should have objected to that title, inasmuch as the antithesis is imperfect between the two things named in it. *Disappointment and Success* are not properly antithetic; *Failure and Success* are. Disappointment is the feeling caused by failure, and

caused also by other things besides failure. Failure is the thing ; disappointment is the feeling caused by the thing ; while success is the thing, and not the feeling. But such minute points apart, the title I have chosen brings out best the subject about which I wish to write. And a very wide subject it is ; and one of universal interest.

I suppose that no one will dispute the fact that in this world there are such things as disappointment and success. I do not mean merely that each man's lot has its share of both ; I mean that there are some men whose life on the whole is a failure, and that there are others whose life on the whole is a success. You and I, my reader, know better than to think that life is a lottery ; but those who think it a lottery, must see that there are human beings who draw the prizes, and others who draw the blanks. I believe in Luck and Ill Luck, as facts ; of course I do not believe the theory which common consent builds upon these facts. There is, of course, no such thing as chance ; this world is driven with far too tight a rein to permit of anything whatsoever falling out in a way properly fortuitous. But it cannot be denied that there are persons with whom everything goes well, and other persons with whom everything goes ill. There are people who invariably win at what are called games of chance. There are people who invariably lose. You remember when Sydney Smith lay on his death-

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bed, how he suddenly startled the watchers 'by it, by breaking a long silence with a sentence from one of his sermons, repeated in a deep, solemn voice, strange from the dying man. *His* life had been successful at last ; but success had come late ; and how much of disappointment he had known ! And though he had tried to bear up cheerily under his early cares, they had sunk in deep. ' We speak of life as a journey,' he said, ' but how differently is that journey performed ! Some are borne along their path in luxury and ease ; while some must walk it with naked feet, mangled and bleeding.'

Who is there that does not sometimes, on a quiet evening, even before he has attained to middle age, sit down and look back upon his college days, and his college friends ; and think sadly of the failures, the disappointments, the broken hearts, which have been among those who all started fair and promised well ? How very much has after life changed the estimates which we formed in those days, of the intellectual mark and probable fate of one's friends and acquaintances ! You remember the dense, stolid dunces of that time : you remember the men who sat next you in the lecture-room, and never answered rightly a question that was put to them : you remember how you used to wonder if they would always be the dunces they were then. Well, I never knew a man who was a dunce at twenty, to prove what might be called a brilliant or even a clever man in after life ; but we

have all known such do wonderfully decently. You did not expect much of them, you see. You did not try them by an exacting standard. If a monkey were to write his name, you would be so much surprised at seeing him do it at all, that you would never think of being surprised that he did not do it very well. So, if a man you knew as a remarkably stupid fellow preaches a decent sermon, you hardly think of remarking that it is very commonplace and dull, you are so much pleased and surprised to find that the man can preach at all. And then, the dunces of college days are often sensible, though slow: and in this world, plain, plodding common sense is very likely in the long run to beat erratic brilliancy. The tortoise passes the hare. I owe an apology to Lord Campbell for even naming him on the same page on which stands the name of dunce: for assuredly in shrewd, massive sense, as well as in kindness of manner, the natural outflow of a kind and good heart, no judge ever surpassed him. But I may fairly point to his career of unexampled success as an instance which proves my principle. See how that man of parts which are sound and solid, rather than brilliant or showy, has won the Derby and the St. Leger of the law; has filled with high credit the places of Chief Justice of England and Lord Chancellor. And contrast his eminently successful and useful course with that of the fitful meteor, Lord Brougham. What a great, dazzling genius Brougham



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unquestionably is! yet his greatest admirer must admit that his life has been a brilliant failure. But while you, thoughtful reader, in such a retrospect as I have been supposing, sometimes wonder at the .decept and reasonable success of the dunce, do you not often lament over the fashion in which those who promised well, and even brilliantly, have disappointed the hopes entertained of them? What miserable failures such have not unfrequently made! And not always through bad conduct either: not always, though sometimes, by taking to vicious courses; but rather by a certain want of tact and sense, or even by just somehow missing the favourable tide. You have got a fair living and a fair standing in the Church; you have held them for eight or ten years; when some evening as you are sitting in your study or playing with your children, a servant tells you, doubtfully, that a man is waiting to see you. A poor, thin, shabbily-dressed fellow comes in, and in faltering tones begs for the loan of five shillings. Ah, with what a start you recognise him! It is the clever fellow whom you hardly beat at college, who was always so lively and merry, who sang so nicely, and was so much asked out into society. You had lost sight of him for several years; and now here he is, shabby, dirty, smelling of whisky, with bloated face and trembling hand: alas, alas, ruined! Oh, do not give him up. Perhaps you can do something for him. Little

kindness he has known for very long. Give him the five shillings by all means ; but next morning see you go out, and try what may be done to lift him out of the slough of despond, and to give him a chance for better days ! I know that it may be all in vain ; and that after years gradually darkening down you may some day, as you pass the police-office, find a crowd at the door, and learn that they have got the corpse of the poor suicide within. And even when the failure is not so utter as this, you find, now and then, as life goes onward, that this and that old acquaintance has, you cannot say how, stepped out of the track, and is stranded. He went into the Church : he is no worse preacher or scholar than many that succeed ; but somehow he never gets a living. You sometimes meet him in the street, threadbare and soured : he probably passes you without recognising you. O reader, to whom God has sent moderate success, always be chivalrously kind and considerate to such a disappointed man !

I have heard of an eminent man who, when well advanced in years, was able to say that through all his life he had never set his mind on anything which he did not succeed in attaining. Great and little aims alike, he never had known what it was to fail. What a curious state of feeling it would be to most men to know themselves able to assert so much ! Think of a mind in which disappointment is a thing

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unknown ! I think that one would be oppressed by a vague sense of fear in regarding one's self as treated by Providence in a fashion so different from the vast majority of the race. It cannot be denied that there are men in this world in whose lot failure seems to be the rule. Everything to which they put their hand breaks down or goes amiss. But most human beings can testify that their lot, like their abilities, their stature, is a sort of middling thing. There is about it an equable sobriety, a sort of average 'endurableness. Some things go well : some things go ill. There is a modicum of disappointment : there is a modicum of success. But so much of disappointment comes to the lot of almost all, that there is no object in nature at which we all look with so much interest as the invariably lucky man—the man whom all this system of things appears to favour. You knew such a one at school : you knew him at college : you knew him at the bar, in the Church, in medicine, in politics, in society. Somehow he pushes his way : things turn up just at the right time for him : great people take a fancy to him : the newspapers cry him up. Let us hope that you do not look at him with any feeling of envy or bitterness ; but you cannot help looking at him with great interest, he is so like yourself, and at the same time so very unlike you. Philosophers tell us that real happiness is very equally distributed ; but there is no doubt that there is a tremendous ex-

ternal difference between the man who lives in a grand house, with every appliance of elegance and luxury, with plump servants, fine horses, many carriages ; and the poor struggling gentleman, perhaps a married curate, whose dwelling is bare, whose dress is poor, whose fare is scanty, whose wife is careworn, whose children are ill fed, shabbily dressed, and scantily educated. It is conceivable that fanciful wants, slights, and failures, may cause the rich man as much and as real suffering as substantial wants and failures cause the poor ; but the world at large will recognise the rich man's lot as one of success, and the poor man's as one of failure.

This is a world of competition. It is a world full of things that many people wish to get, and that all cannot get at once ; and to say this is as much as to say that this is a world of failure and disappointments. All things desirable, by their very existence imply the disappointment of some. When you, my reader, being no longer young, look with a philosophic eye at some pretty girl entering a drawing-room, you cannot but reflect, as you survey the pleasing picture, and more especially when you think of the twenty thousand pounds—Ah ! my gentle young friend, you will some day make one heart very jolly, but a great many more extremely envious, wrathful, and disappointed. So with all other desirable things ; so with a large living in the Church ; so with any place of dignity ; so with a seat on the

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bench ; so with a bishopric ; so with the woolsack ; so with the towers of Lambeth. So with smaller matters ; so with a good business in the greengrocery line ; so with a well-paying milk-walk ; so with a clerk's situation of eighty pounds a-year ; so with an errand-boy's place at three shillings a week, which thirty candidates want, and only one can get. Alas for our fallen race ! Is it not part, at least, of some men's pleasure in gaining some object which has been generally sought for, to think of the mortification of the poor fellows that failed ?

Disappointment, in short, may come and must come wherever man can set his wishes and his hopes. The only way not to be disappointed when a thing turns out against you, is not to have really cared how the thing went. It is not a truism to remark that this is impossible if you did care. Of course you are not disappointed at failing of attaining an end which you did not care whether you attained or not ; but men seek very few such ends. If a man has worked day and night for six weeks in canvassing his county, and then, having been ignominiously beaten, on the following day tells you he is not in the least degree disappointed, he might just as truly assure you, if you met him walking up streaming with water from a river into which he had just fallen, that he is not the least wet. No doubt there is an elasticity in the healthy mind which very soon tides it over even a severe disappointment ; and no doubt

the grapes which are unattainable do sometimes in actual fact turn sour.\* But let no man tell us that he has not known the bitterness of disappointment for at least a brief space, if he have ever from his birth tried to get anything, great or small, and yet not got it. Failure is indeed a thing of all degrees, from the most fanciful to the most weighty: disappointment is a thing of all degrees, from the transient feeling that worries for a minute, to the great crushing blow that breaks the mind's spring for ever. Failure is a fact which reaches from the poor tramp who lies down by the wayside to die, up to the man who is only made Chief Justice when he wanted the Chancellorship, or who dies Bishop of London when he had set his heart upon being Archbishop of Canterbury; or to the Prime Minister, unrivalled in eloquence, in influence, in genius, with his fair domains and his proud descent, but whose horse is beaten after being first favourite for the Derby. Who shall say that either disappointed man felt less bitterness and weariness of heart than the other? Each was no more than disappointed; and the keenness of disappointment bears no proportion to the reality of the value of the object whose loss caused it. And what endless crowds of human beings, children and old men, nobles and snobs, rich men and poor, know the bitterness of disappointment from day to day! It begins from the child shedding many tears when the toy bought with the long-hoarded pence

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is broken the first day it comes home; it gets on to the Duke expecting the Garter, who sees in the newspaper at breakfast that the yards of blue ribbon have been given to another. What a hard time his servants have that day! How loudly he roars at them, how willingly would he kick them! Little reck he that forenoon of his magnificent castle and his ancestral woods. It may here be mentioned that a very pleasing opportunity is afforded to malignant people for mortifying a clever, ambitious man, when any office is vacant to which it is known he aspires. A judge of the Queen's Bench has died: you, Mr. Verjuice, know how Mr. Swetter, Q.C., has been rising at the bar; you know how well he deserves the ermine. Well, walk down to his chambers; go in and sit down; never mind how busy he is—*your* time is of no value—and talk of many different men as extremely suitable for the vacant seat on the bench, but never in the remotest manner hint at the claims of Swetter himself. I have often seen the like done. And you, Mr. Verjuice, may conclude almost with certainty that in doing all this you are vexing and mortifying a deserving man. And such a consideration will no doubt be compensation sufficient to your amiable nature for the fact that every generous muscular Christian would like to take you by the neck, and swing your sneaking carcase out of the window.

Even a slight disappointment, speedily to be repaired, has in it something that jars painfully the mechanism of the mind. You go to the train, expecting a friend, certainly. He does not come. Now this worries you, even though you receive at the station a telegraphic message that he will be by the train which follows in two hours. Your magazine fails to come by post on the last day of the month ; you have a dull, vague sense of something wanting for an hour or two, even though you are sure that you will have it next morning. And indeed a very large share of the disappointments of civilised life is associated with the post-office. I do not suppose the extreme case of the poor fellow who calls at the office expecting a letter containing the money without which he cannot see how he is to get through the day ; nor of the man who finds no letter on the day when he expects to hear how it fares with a dear relative who is desperately sick. I am thinking merely of the lesser disappointments which commonly attend post-time : the *Times* not coming when you were counting with more than ordinary certainty on its appearing ; the letter of no great consequence, which yet you would have liked to have had. A certain blankness—a feeling difficult to define—attends even the slightest disappointment ; and the effect of a great one is very stunning and embittering indeed. You remember how the nobleman in *Ten Thousand a Year*, who had been refused a seat



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in the Cabinet, sympathised with poor Titmouse's exclamation when, looking at the manifestations of gay life in Hyde-park, and feeling his own absolute exclusion from it, he consigned everything to perdition. All the ballads of Professor Aytoun and Mr. Théodore Martin are admirable, but there is none which strikes me as more so than the brilliant imitation of *Locksley Hall*. And how true to nature the state of mind ascribed to the vulgar snob who is the hero of the ballad, who, bethinking himself of his great disappointment when his cousin married somebody else, bestowed his extremest objurgations upon all who had abetted the hateful result, and then summed up thus comprehensively :—

Cursed be the foul apprentice, who his loathsome fees did earn ;  
Cursed be the clerk and parson ; CURSED BE THE WHOLE CONCERN !

It may be mentioned here as a fact to which experience will testify, that such disappointments as that at the railway station and the post-office are most likely to come when you are counting with absolute certainty upon things happening as you wish ; when not a misgiving has entered your mind as to your friend's arriving or your letter coming. A little latent fear in your soul that you *may* possibly be disappointed, seems to have a certain power to fend off disappointment, on the same principle on which taking out an umbrella is found to prevent rain. What you are prepared for rarely happens.

The precise thing you expected comes not once in a thousand times. A confused state of mind results from long experience of such cases. Your real feeling often is: Such a thing seems quite sure to happen; I may say I expect it to happen; and yet I don't expect it, because I do: for experience has taught me that the precise thing which I expect, which I think most likely, hardly ever comes. I am not prepared to side with a thoughtless world, which is ready to laugh at the confused statement of the Irishman who had killed his pig.\* It is not a bull; it is a great psychological fact that is involved in his seemingly contradictory declaration—'It did not weigh as much as I expected, *and I never thought it would!*'

When young ladies tell us that such and such a person 'has met with a disappointment,' we all understand what is meant. The phrase, though it is conventionally intelligible enough, involves a fallacy: it seems to teach that the disappointment of the youthful heart in the matter of that which in its day is no doubt the most powerful of all the affections, is by emphasis the greatest disappointment which a human being can ever know. Of course that is an entire mistake. People get over *that* disappointment: not but what it may leave its trace, and possibly colour the whole of remaining life; sometimes resulting in an unlovely bitterness and hardness of

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nature ; sometimes prolonging even into age, a lingering thread of old romance, and keeping a kindly corner in a heart which worldly cares have in great measure deadened. But the disappointment which has its seat in the affections is outgrown as the affections themselves are outgrown, as the season of *their* predominance passes away ; and the disappointment which sinks the deepest and lasts the longest of all the disappointments which are fanciful rather than material, is that which reaches a man through his ambition and his self-love—principles in his nature which outlast the heyday of the heart's supremacy, and which endure to man's latest years. The bitter and the enduring disappointment to most human beings is that which makes them feel, in one way or other, that they are less wise, clever, popular, graceful, accomplished, tall, active, and in short fine, than they had fancied themselves to be. But it is only to a limited portion of human kind that such words as disappointment and success are mainly suggestive of gratified or disappointed ambition, of happy or blighted affection ; to the great majority they are suggestive rather of success or non-success in earning bread and cheese, in finding money to pay the rent, in generally making the ends meet. You are very young, my reader, and little versed in the practical affairs of ordinary life, if you do not know that such prosaic matters make to most men the great aim of their being here, so far as that aim is bounded by

this world's horizon. The poor cabman is successful or is disappointed, according as he sees, while the hours of the day are passing over, that he is making up or not making up the shillings he must hand over to his master at night, before he has a penny to get food for his wife and children. The little tradesman is successful or the reverse, according as he sees or does not see from week to week such a small accumulation of petty profits as may pay his landlord, and leave a little margin by help of which he and his family may struggle on. And many an educated man knows the analogous feelings. The poor barrister, as he waits for the briefs which come in so slowly—the young doctor, hoping for patients—understand them all. Oh what slight, fanciful things, to such men, appear such disappointments as that of the wealthy proprietor who fails to carry his county, or the rich mayor or provost who fails of being knighted !

There is an extraordinary arbitrariness about the way in which great success is allotted in this world. Who shall say that in one case out of every two, relative success is in proportion to relative merit? Nor need this be said in anything of a grumbling or captious spirit. It is but repeating what a very wise man said long ago, that 'the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' I suppose no one will say that the bishops are the greatest

men in the Church of England, or that every Chief Justice is a greater man than every puisne judge. Success is especially arbitrary in cases where it goes by pure patronage: in many such cases the patron would smile at your weakness if you fancied that the desire to find the best man ever entered his head. In the matter of the bench and bar, where tangible duties are to be performed, a patron is compelled to a certain amount of decency; for, though he may not pretend to seek for the fittest man, he must at least profess to have sought a fit man. No prime minister dare appoint a blockhead a judge, without at least denying loudly that he is a blockhead. But the arbitrariness of success is frequently the result of causes quite apart from any arbitrariness in the intention of the human disposer of success; a Higher Hand seems to come in here. The tide of events settles the matter: the arbitrariness is in the way in which the tide of events sets. Think of that great lawyer and great man, Sir Samuel Romilly. Through years of his practice at the bar, he himself, and all who knew him, looked to the woolsack as his certain destination. You remember the many entries in his diary bearing upon the matter; and I suppose the opinion of the most competent was clear as to his unrivalled fitness for the post. Yet all ended in nothing. The race was not to the swift. The first favourite was beaten, and more than one outsider has carried off the prize for

which he strove in vain. Did any mortal ever dream, during his days of mediocrity at the bar, or his time of respectability as a Baron of the Exchequer, that Sir R. M. Rolfe was the future Chancellor? Probably there is no sphere in which there is more of disappointment and heartburning than the army. It must be supremely mortifying to a grey-headed veteran, who has served his country for forty years, to find a beardless Guardsman put over his head into the command of his regiment, and to see honours and emoluments showered upon that fair-weather colonel. And I should judge that the despatch written by a General after an important battle must be a source of sad disappointment to many who fancied that their names might well be mentioned there. But after all, I do not know but that it tends to lessen disappointment, that success should be regarded as going less by merit than by influence or good luck. The disappointed man can always soothe himself with the fancy that he deserved to succeed. It would be a desperately mortifying thing to the majority of mankind, if it were distinctly ascertained that each man gets just what he deserves. The admitted fact that the square man is sometimes put in the round hole, is a cause of considerable consolation to all disappointed men, and to their parents, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers.

No stronger proof can be adduced of the little

correspondence that often exists between success and merit, than the fact that the self-same man, by the exercise of the self-same powers, may at one time starve and at another drive his carriage and four. When poor Edmund Kean was acting in barns to country bumpkins, and barely finding bread for his wife and child, he was just as great a genius as when he was crowding Drury Lane. When Brougham presided in the House of Lords, he was not a bit better or greater than when he had hung about in the Parliament House at Edinburgh, a briefless and suspected junior barrister. When all London crowded to see the hippopotamus, he was just the animal that he was a couple of years later, when no one took the trouble of looking at him. And when George Stephenson died, amid the applause and gratitude of all the intelligent men in Britain, he was the same man, maintaining the same principle, as when men of science and of law regarded as a mischievous lunatic the individual who declared that some day the railroad would be the king's highway, and mail-coaches would be drawn by steam.

As to the very highest prizes of human affairs, it is, I believe, admitted on all hands, that these generally fall to second-rate men. Civilised nations have found it convenient entirely to give up the hallucination that the monarch is the greatest, wisest, and best man in his dominions. Nobody supposes *that*. And in the case of hereditary dynasties, such

an end is not even aimed at. But it is curious to find how with elective sovereignties it is just the same way. The great statesmen of America have very rarely attained to the dignity of President of the United States. Not Clays and Websters, but Polks and Fillmores, have had their four years of frowsy royalty at the White House. And even Cardinal Wiseman candidly tells us that the post which is regarded by millions as the highest which can be held by mortal, is all but systematically given to judicious mediocrity. A great genius will never be Pope. The coach must not be trusted to too dashing a charioteer. Give us the safe and steady man. Everybody knows that the same usage applies to the Primacy in England. Bishops must be sensible ; but archbishops are by some regarded with suspicion if they have ever committed themselves to sentiments more startling than that two and two make four.

Let me suppose, my reader, that you have met with great success : I mean success which is very great in your own especial field. The lists are just put out, and you are senior wrangler ; or you have got the gold medal in some country grammar-school. The feeling in both cases is the same. In each case there combines with the exultant emotion, an intellectual conception that you are one of the greatest of the human race. Well, was not the feeling a strange one ? Did you not feel somewhat afraid ? It seemed too much. Something was sure to



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come, you thought, that would take you down. Few are burdened with such a feeling; but surely there is something alarming in great success. You were a barber's boy: you are made a peer. Surely you must go through life with an ever-recurring emotion of surprise at finding yourself where you are. It must be curious to occupy a place whence you look down upon the heads of most of your kind. A duke gets accustomed to it; but surely even he must sometimes wonder how he comes to be placed so many degrees above multitudes who deserve as well. Or do such come to fancy that their merit is equal to their success; and that by as much as they are better off than other men, they are better than other men? Very likely they do. It is all in human nature. And I suppose the times have been in which it would have been treasonable to hint that a man with a hundred thousand pounds a year was not at least two thousand times as good as one with fifty.

The writer always feels a peculiar sympathy with failure, and with people who are suffering from disappointment, great or small. It is not that he himself is a disappointed man. No; he has to confess, with deep thankfulness, that his success has far, very far, transcended his deserts. And, like many other men, he has found that one or two events in his life, which seemed disappointments at the time, were in truth great and signal blessings. Still,

every one has known enough of the blank, desolate feeling of disappointment, to sympathise keenly with the disappointments of others. I feel deeply for the poor Punch and Judy man, simulating great excitement in the presence of a small, uninterested group, from which people keep dropping away. I feel for the poor barn-actor, who discovers, on his first entrance upon his rude stage, that the magnates of the district, who promised to be present at the performance, have not come. You have gone to see a panorama, or to hear a lecture on phrenology. Did you not feel for the poor fellow, the lecturer or exhibitor, when he came in, ten minutes past the hour, and found little but empty benches? Did you not see what a chill fell upon him: how stupified he seemed: in short, how much disappointed he was? And if the money he had hoped to earn that evening was to pay the lodgings in which he and his wife were staying, you may be sure there was a heart sickness about his disappointment far beyond the mortification of mere self-love. When a rainy day stops a pic-nic, or mars the enjoyment of it, although the disappointment is hardly a serious one, still it is sure to cause so much real suffering, that only rancorous old ladies will rejoice in the fact. It is curious how men who have known disappointment themselves, and who describe it well, seem to like to paint lives which in the meantime are all hope and success. There is Mr. Thackeray. With what

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sympathy, with what enjoyment, he shows us the healthy, wealthy, hopeful youth, like Clive Newcome, or young Pendennis, when it was all sunshine around the young prince ! And yet how sad a picture of life he gives us in *The Newcomes* ! It would not have done to make it otherwise : it is true, though sad : that history of the good and gallant gentleman, whose life was a long disappointment, a long failure in all on which he had set his heart ; in his early love, in his ambitious plans for his son, even in his hopes for his son's happiness, in his own schemes of fortune, till that life of honour ended in the almshouse at last. How the reader wishes that the author would make brighter days dawn upon his hero ! But the author cannot : he must hold on unflinchingly as fate. In such a story as his, truth can no more be sacrificed to our wishes than in real life we know it to be. Well, all disappointment is discipline ; and received in a right spirit, it may prepare us for better things elsewhere. It has been said that heaven is a place for those who failed on earth. The greatest hero is perhaps the man who does his very best, and signally fails, and still is not embittered by the failure. And looking at the fashion in which an unseen Power permits wealth and rank and influence to go sometimes in this world, we are possibly justified in concluding that in His judgment the prizes of this Vanity Fair are held as of no great account. A

life here, in which you fail of every end you seek, yet which disciplines you for a better, is assuredly not a failure.

What a blessing it would be, if men's ambition were in every case made to keep pace with their ability ! Very much disappointment arises from a man's having an absurd over-estimate of his own powers, which leads him, to use an expressive Scotticism, to *even himself* to some position for which he is utterly unfit, and which he has no chance at all of reaching. A lad comes to the university who has been regarded in his own family as a great genius, and who has even distinguished himself at some little country school. What a rude shock to the poor fellow's estimate of himself ; what a smashing of the hopes of those at home, is sure to come when he measures his length with his superiors ; and is compelled, as is frequently the case, to take a third or fourth-rate position. If you ever read the lives of actors (and every one ought, for they show you a new and curious phase of life), you must have smiled, to see the ill-spelled, ungrammatical letters in which some poor fellow writes to a London manager, for an engagement, and declares that he feels within him the makings of a greater actor than Garrick or Kean. How many young men who go into the Church fancy that they are to surpass Melvill or Chalmers ! No doubt, reader, you have sometimes

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come out of a church where you had heard a preacher aiming at the most ambitious eloquence, who evidently had not the slightest vocation that way ; and you have thought it would be well if no man ever wished to be eloquent who had it not in him to be so. ' Would that the principle were universally true ! Who has not sometimes been amused in passing along the fashionable street of a great city, to see a little vulgar snob dressed out within an inch of his life, walking along, evidently fancying that he looks like a gentleman, and that he is the admired of all admirers ? Sometimes, in a certain street which I might name, I have witnessed such a spectacle, sometimes with amusement, oftener with sorrow and pity, as I thought of the fearful, dark surmises which must often cross the poor snob's mind, that he is failing in his anxious endeavours. Occasionally, too, I have beheld a man bestriding a horse in that peculiar fashion which may be described as his being on the outside of the animal, slipping away over the hot stones, possibly at a trot, and fancying (though with many suspicions to the contrary) that he is witching the world with noble horsemanship. What a pity that such poor fellows will persist in aiming at what they cannot achieve ! What mortification and disappointment they must often know ! The horse backs on to the pavement, into a plate-glass window, just as Maria, for whose sake the poor screw was hired, is passing by. The boys halloo in derision ; and some

ostler, helpful, but not complimentary, extricates the rider, and says, 'I sec you have never been on 'ossback before; you should not have pulled the curb-bit that way!' And when the vulgar dandy, strutting along, with his Brummagem jewellery, his choking collar, and his awfully tight boots which cause him agony, meets the true gentleman, how it rushes upon him that he himself is only a humbug! How the poor fellow's heart sinks!

Turning from such inferior fields of ambition as these, I think how often it happens that men come to some sphere in life with a flourish of trumpets, as destined to do great things, and then fail. There is a modest, quiet self-confidence, without which you will hardly get on in this world; but I believe, as a general rule, that the men who have attained to very great success have started with very moderate expectations. Their first aim was lowly; and the way gradually opened before them. Their ambition, like their success, went on step by step; they did not go at the top of the tree at once. It would be easy to mention instances in which those who started with high pretensions have been taught by stern fact to moderate them; in which the man who came over from the Irish bar intending to lead the Queen's Bench, and become a Chief Justice, was glad, after thirty years of disappointment, to get made a County Court judge.\* Not that this is always so; sometimes pretension, if big enough,

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secures success. A man setting up as a silk-mercant in a strange town is much likelier to succeed if he opens a huge shop, painted in flaring colours, and puffed by enormous bills and vast advertising vans, than if he set up in a modest way, in something like proportion to his means. And if he succeed, well; if he fail, his creditors bear the loss. A great field has been opened for the disappointment of men who start with the flourish of trumpets already mentioned, by the growing system of competitive examinations. By these, your own opinion of yourself, and the home opinion of you, are brought to a severe test. I think with sympathy of the disappointment of poor lads who hang on week after week, hoping to hear that they have succeeded in gaining the coveted appointment, and then learn that they have failed. I think with sympathy of their poor parents. Even when the prize lost is not substantial pudding, but only airy praise, it is a bitter thing to lose it, after running the winner close. It must be a supremely irritating and mortifying thing to be second wrangler. Look at the rows of young fellows, sitting with their papers before them at a Civil Service Examination, and think what interest and what hopes are centred on every one of them. Think how many count on great success, kept up to do so by the estimation in which they are held at home. Their sisters and their mothers think them equal to any-

thing. 'Sometimes justly ; sometimes the fact justifies the anticipation.' When Baron Alderson went to Cambridge, he tells us that he would have spurned the offer of being second man of his year ; and sure enough, he was out of sight the first. But for one man of whom the home estimation is no more than just, there are ten thousand in whose case, to strangers, it appears simply preposterous.

There is one sense in which all after life may be said to be a disappointment. It is far different from that which it was pictured by early anticipations and hopes. The very greatest material success still leaves the case thus. And no doubt it seems strange to many to look back on the fancies of youth, which experience has sobered down. When you go back, my reader, to the village where you were brought up, don't you remember how you used to fancy that when you were a man you would come to it in your carriage and four ? This, it is unnecessary to add, you have not yet done. You thought likewise that, when you came back you would be arrayed in a scarlet coat, possibly in a cuirass of steel ; whereas in fact you have come to the little inn where nobody knows you to spend the night, and you are wandering along the bank of the river (how little changed !) in a shooting-jacket of shepherd's plaid. You intended to marry the village grocer's pretty daughter ; and for that intention probably you were somewhat



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hastily dismissed to a school a hundred miles off ; but this evening as you passed the shop you discovered her, a plump matron, calling to her children in a voice rather shrill than sweet ; and you discovered from the altered sign above the door that her father is dead, and that she has married the shopman, your hated rival of former years. And yet how happily the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb ! You are not the least mortified. You are much amused that your youthful fancies have been blighted. It would have been fearful to have married that excellent individual ; the shooting-jacket is greatly more comfortable than the coat of mail ; and as for the carriage and four, why, even if you could afford them, you would seldom choose to drive four horses. And it is so with the more substantial anticipations of maturer years. The man who, as already mentioned, intended to be a Chief Justice, is quite happy when he is made a County Court judge. The man who intended to eclipse Mr. Dickens in the arts of popular authorship is content and proud to be the great writer of the *London Journal*. The clergyman who would have liked a grand cathedral like York Minster is perfectly pleased with his little country church, ivy-green and grey. We come, if we are sensible folk, to be content with what we can get, though we have not what we could wish.

Still, there are certain cases in which this can hardly be so. A man of sense can bear cheerfully

the frustration of the romantic fancies of childhood and youth ; but not many are so philosophical in regard to the comparatively reasonable anticipations of more reasonable years. When you got married at five-and-forty, your hopes were not extravagant. You knew quite well you were not winning the loveliest of her sex, and indeed you felt you had no right to expect to do so. You were well aware that in wisdom, knowledge, accomplishment, amiability, you could not reasonably look for more than the average of the race. But you thought you might reasonably look for *that* : and now, alas, alas ! you find you have not got it. How have I pitied a worthy and sensible man, listening to his wife making a fool of herself before a large company of people ! How have I pitied such a one, when I heard his wife talking the most idiotical nonsense ; or when I saw her flirting scandalously with a notorious scapegrace ; or learned of the large parties which she gave in his absence, to the discredit of her own character and the squandering of his hard-earned gains ! No habit, no philosophy, will ever reconcile a human being of right feeling to such a disappointment as *that*. And even a sadder thing than this—one of the saddest things in life—is when a man begins to feel that his whole life is a failure ; not merely a failure as compared with the vain fancies of youth, but a failure as compared with his sobered convictions of what he ought to have

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been and what he might have been. Probably, in a desponding mood, we have all known the feeling ; and even when we half knew it was morbid and transient, it was a very painful one. But painful it must be beyond all names of pain, where it is the abiding, calm, sorrowful conviction of the man's whole being. Sore must be the heart of the man of middle age, who often thinks that he is thankful his father is in his grave, and so beyond mourning over his son's sad loss in life. And even when the stinging sense of guilt is absent, it is a mournful thing for one to feel that he has, so to speak, missed stays in his earthly voyage, and run upon a mud-bank which he can never get off : to feel one's self ingloriously and uselessly stranded, while those who started with us pass by with gay flag and swelling sail. And all this may be while it is hard to know where to attach blame ; it may be when there was nothing worse to complain of than a want of promptitude, resolution, and tact, at the one testing time. Every one knows the passage in point in Shakspeare.

Disappointment, I have said, is almost sure to be experienced in a greater or less degree, so long as anything remains to be wished or sought. And a provision is made for the indefinite continuance of disappointment in the lot of even the most successful of men, by the fact *in rerum naturâ* that whenever

the wants felt on a lower level are supplied, you advance to a higher platform, where a new crop of wants is felt. Till the lower wants are supplied you never feel the higher ; and accordingly people who pass through life barely succeeding in gaining the supply of the lower wants, will hardly be got to believe that the higher wants are ever really felt at all. A man who is labouring anxiously to earn food and shelter for his children—who has no farther worldly end, and who thinks he would be perfectly happy if he could only be assured on New Year's day that he would never fail in earning these until the thirty-first of December, will hardly believe you when you tell him that the Marquis at the castle is now utterly miserable because the King would not give him a couple of yards of blue or green ribbon. And it is curious in how many cases worldly-successful men mount, step after step, into a new series of wants, implying a new set of mortifications and disappointments. A person begins as a small tradesman ; all he aims at is a maintenance for him, and his. That is his first aim. Say he succeeds in reaching it. A little ago he thought he would have been quite content could he only do *that*. But from his new level he sees afar a new peak to climb ; now he aims at a fortune. That is his next aim. Say he reaches it. Now he buys an estate ; now he aims at being received and admitted as a country gentleman ; and the remainder of his life is given to

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striving for social recognition in the county.' How he schemes to get the baronet to dine with him, and the baronet's lady to call upon his homely spouse ! And every one has remarked with amusement the hive of petty mortifications, failures, and disappointments, through which he fights his way, till, as it may chance, he actually gains a dubious footing in the society he seeks, or gives up the endeavour as a final failure. Who shall say that any one of the successive wants the man has felt is more fanciful, less real, than any other ? To Mr. Oddbody, living in his fine house, it is just as serious an aim to get asked to the Duke's ball, as in former days it was to Jack Oddbody to carry home on Saturday night the shillings which were to buy his bread and cheese.

And another shade of disappointment which keeps pace with all material success is that which arises, not from failing to get a thing, but from getting it and then discovering that it is not what we had fancied—that it will not make us happy. Is not this disappointment felt everywhere ? When the writer was a little boy, he was promised that on a certain birthday a donkey should be bought for his future riding. Did not he frequently allude to it in conversation with his companions ? Did not he plague the servants for information as to the natural history and moral idiosyncrasy of donkeys ? Did not the long-eared visage appear sometimes

through his dreams? Ah, the donkey came! Then followed the days of being pitched over his head; the occasions on which the brute of impervious hide rushed through hedges and left me sticking in them: happiness was no nearer, though the donkey was there. Have you not, my philosophic friend, had your donkey? I mean your moral donkey. Yes, and scores of such. When you were a schoolboy, longing for the holidays, have you not chalked upon doors the legend—OH FOR AUGUST! Vague, delightful visions of perfect happiness were wrapped up in the words. But the holidays came, as all holidays have done and will do; and in a few days you were heartily wearied of them. When you were spoony about Marjory Anne, you thought that once your donkey came, once you were fairly married and settled, what a fine thing it would be! I do not say a syllable against that youthful matron; but I presume you have discovered that she falls short of perfection, and that wedded life has its many cares. You thought you would enjoy so much the setting-up of your carriage; your wife and you often enjoyed it by anticipation on dusty summer days: but though all very well, wood and iron and leather never made the vehicle that shall realise your anticipations. The horses were often lame; the springs would sometimes break; the paint was always getting scratched and the lining cut. Oh, what a nuisance is a carriage! You fancied you would be

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perfectly happy when you retired from business and settled in the country. What a comment upon such fancies is the fashion in which retired men of business haunt the places of their former toils like unquiet ghosts ! How sick they get of the country ! I do not think of grand disappointments of the sort ; of the satiety of Vathek, turning sickly away from his earthly paradise at Cintra ; nor of the graceful towers I have seen rising from a woody cliff above a summer sea, and of the story told me of their builder, who, after rearing them, lost interest in them, and in sad disappointment left them to others, and went back to the busy town wherein he had made his wealth. I think of men, more than one or two, who rented their acre of land by the sea-side, and built their pretty cottage, made their grassplots and trained their roses, and then in unaccustomed idleness grew weary of the whole, and sold their place to some keen bargain-maker for a tithe of what it cost them.

Why is it that failure in attaining ambitious ends is so painful ? When one has honestly done one's best, and is beaten after all, conscience must be satisfied : the wound is solely to self-love ; and is it not to the discredit of our nature that *that* should imply such a weary, blank, bitter feeling as it often does ? Is it that every man has within his heart a lurking belief that, notwithstanding the world's ignorance of the fact, there never was in the world

anybody, so remarkable as himself? I think that many mortals need daily to be putting down a vague feeling which really comes to that. You who have had experience of many men, know that you can hardly over-estimate the extent and depth of human vanity. Never be afraid but that nine men out of ten will swallow with avidity flattery, however gross; especially if it ascribe to them those qualities of which they are most manifestly deficient.

A disappointed man looks with great interest at the man who has obtained what he himself wanted. Your mother, reader, says that her ambition for you would be entirely gratified if you could but reach a certain place which some one you know has held for twenty years. You look at him with much curiosity; he appears very much like yourself; and, curiously, he does not appear particularly happy. Oh, reader, whatever you do—though last week he gained without an effort what you have been wishing for all your life—do not hate him. Resolve that you will love and wish well to the man who fairly succeeded where you fairly failed. Go to him and get acquainted with him: if you and he are both true men, you will not find it a difficult task to like him. It is perhaps asking too much of human nature to ask you to do all this in the case of the man who has carried off the woman you loved; but as regards anything else, do it all. Go to your successful rival, heartily congratulate him. Don't be jesuitical;



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don't merely *felicitate* the man ; put down the rising feeling of envy : *that* is always out-and-out wrong. Don't give it a moment's quarter. You clerks in an office, ready to be angry with a fellow-clerk who gets the chance of a trip to Scotland on business, don't give in to the feeling. Shake hands with him all round, and go in a body with him to Euston Square, and give him three cheers as he departs by the night mail. And you, greater mortals—you, rector of a beautiful parish, who think you would have done for a bishop as well as the clergyman next you who has got the mitre ; you, clever barrister, sure some day to be solicitor-general, though sore to-day because a man next door has got that coveted post before you ; go and see the successful man—go forthwith, congratulate him heartily, say frankly you wish it had been you : it will do great good both to him and to yourself. Let it not be that envy—that bitter and fast-growing fiend—shall be suffered in your heart for one minute. When I was at college I sat on the same bench with a certain man. We were about the same age. Now, I am a country parson, and he is a cabinet minister. Oh, how he has distanced poor me in the race of life ! Well, he had a tremendous start, no doubt. Now, shall I hate him ? Shall I pitch into him, rake up all his errors of youth, tell how stupid he was (though indeed he was not stupid), and bitterly gloat over the occasion on which he fell on the ice

and tore his inexpressibles in the presence of a grinning throng? No, my old fellow-student, who have now doubtless forgotten my name, though I so well remember yours, though you got your honours possibly in some measure from the accident of your birth, you have nobly justified their being given you so early; and so I look on with interest to your loftier advancement yet, and I say—God bless you!

I think, if I were an examiner at one of the Universities, that I should be an extremely popular one. No man should ever be plucked. Of course it would be very wrong, and, happily, the work is in the hands of those who are much fitter for it; but, instead of thinking solely and severely of a man's fitness to pass, I could not help thinking a great deal of the heartbreak it would be to the poor fellow and his family if he were turned. It would be ruin to any magazine to have me for its editor. I should always be printing all sorts of rubbishing articles, which are at present consigned to the Balaam-box. I could not bear to grieve and disappoint the young lady who sends her gushing verses. I should be picturing to myself the long hours of toil that resulted in the clever lad's absurd attempt at a review, and all his fluttering hopes and fears as to whether it was to be accepted or not. No doubt it is by this mistaken kindness that institutions are damaged and ruined. The weakness of a sympathetic bishop

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burdens the Church with a clergyman who for many years will be an injury to her; and it would have been far better even for the poor fellow himself to have been decidedly and early kept out of a vocation for which he is wholly unfit. I am far from saying that the resolute examiner who plucks freely, and the resolute editor who rejects firmly, are deficient in kindness of heart, or even in vividness of imagination to picture what they are doing: though much of the suffering and disappointment of this world is caused by men who are almost unaware of what they do. Like the brothers of *Isabella*, in Keats' beautiful poem,

Half ignorant, they turn an easy wheel,  
That sets sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

Yet though principle and moral decision may be in you sufficient to prevent your weakly yielding to the feeling, be sure you always sympathise with failure; —honest, laborious failure. And I think all but very malicious persons generally do sympathise with it. It is easier to sympathise with failure than with success. No trace of envy comes in to mar your sympathy, and you have a pleasant sense that you are looking down from a loftier elevation. The average man likes to have some one to look down upon—even to look down upon kindly. I remember being greatly touched by hearing of a young man of much promise, who went to preach his first sermon in a little church by the sea-shore in a lonely

highland glen. He preached his sermon, and got on pretty fairly; but after service he went down to the shore of the far-sounding sea, and wept to think how sadly he had fallen short of his ideal, how poor was his appearance compared to what he had intended and hoped. Perhaps a foolish vanity and self-conceit was at the foundation of his disappointment; but though I did not know him at all, I could not but have a very kindly sympathy for him. I heard, years afterwards, with great pleasure, that he had attained to no small eminence and success as a pulpit orator; and I should not have alluded to him here but for the fact that in early youth, and amid greater expectations of him, he passed away from this life of high aims and poor fulfilments. I think how poor Keats, no doubt morbidly ambitious as well as morbidly sensitive, declared in his preface to *Endymion* that 'there is no fiercer hell than failure in a great attempt.'

Most thoughtful men must feel it a curious and interesting study to trace the history of the closing days of those persons who have calmly and deliberately, in no sudden heat of passion, taken away their own life. In such cases, of course, we see the sense of failure, absolute and complete. They have quietly resolved to give up life as a losing game. You remember the poor man who, having spent his last shilling, retired to a wood far from human dwellings, and there died voluntarily by starvation. He kept

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a diary of those days of gradual death, setting out his feelings both of body and mind. No nourishment passed his lips after he had chosen his last resting-place, save a little water, which he dragged himself to a pond to drink. He was not discovered till he was dead ; but his melancholy chronicle appeared to have been carried down to very near the time when he became unconscious. I remember its great characteristic appeared to be a sense of utter failure. There seemed to be no passion, none of the bitter desperate resolution which prompts the energetic ‘ Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world ; ’ but merely a weary, lonely wish to creep quietly away. I have no look but one of sorrow and pity to cast on the poor suicide’s grave. I think the common English verdict is right as well as charitable, which supposes that in every such case reason has become unhinged, and responsibility is gone. And what desperate misery, what a black horrible anguish of heart, whether expressing itself calmly or feverishly, must have laid its gripe upon a human being before it can overcome in him the natural clinging to life, and make him deliberately turn his back upon ‘ the warm precincts of the cheerful clay.’ No doubt it is the saddest of all sad ends ; but I do not forget that a certain Authority, the highest of all authorities, said to all human beings, ‘ Judge not, that ye be not judged.’ The writer has, in the course of his duty, looked upon more than one sui-

cide's dead face ; and the lines of Hood appeared to sketch the fit feeling with which to do so :—

Owning her weakness,  
Her evil behaviour ;  
And leaving, with meekness,  
Her soul to her Saviour.

What I have just written recalls to me, by some link of association, the words I once heard a simple old Scotchwoman utter by her son's deathbed. He was a young man of twenty-two, a pious and good young man, and I had seen him very often throughout his gradual decline. Calling one morning, I found he was gone, and his mother begged me to come and see his face once more ; and standing for the last time by him, I said (and I could say them honestly) some words of Christian comfort to the poor old woman. I told her, in words far better than any of my own, how the Best Friend of mankind had said, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die.' I remember well her answer. 'Ay,' said she, 'he gaed away trusting in *that* ; and he'll be sorely disappointed if he doesna' find it so.' Let me venture to express my hope, that when my readers and I pass within the veil, we may run the risk of no other disappointment than that these words should prove false ; and *then* it will be well with us. There will be no

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disappointment *there*, in the sense of things failing to come up to our expectations.

Let it be added, that there *are* disappointments with which even the kindest hearts will have no sympathy, and failures over which we may without malignity rejoice. You do not feel very deeply for the disappointed burglar, who retires from your dwelling at 3 A.M., leaving a piece of the calf of his leg in the jaws of your trusty watch-dog; nor for the Irish bog-trotter who (poor fellow), from behind the hedge, misses his aim at the landlord who fed him and his family through the season of famine. You do not feel very deeply for the disappointment of the friend, possibly the slight acquaintance, who with elongated face retires from your study, having failed to persuade you to attach your signature to a bill for some hundreds of pounds, 'just as a matter of form.' Very likely he wants the money; so did the burglar: but is that any reason why *you* should give it to him? Refer him to the wealthy and influential relatives of whom he has frequently talked to you; tell him they are the very people to assist him in such a case with their valuable autograph. As for yourself, tell him you know what you owe to your children and yourself; and say that the slightest recurrence to such a subject must be the conclusion of all intercourse between you. Ah, poor disappointed fellow! How heartless it is in

you to refuse to pay, out of your hard earnings, the money which he so jauntily and freely spent !

How should disappointment be met ? Well, *that* is far too large a question to be taken up at this stage of my essay, though there are various suggestions which I should like to make. Some disappointed men take to gardening and farming ; and capital things they are. But when disappointment is extreme, it will paralyse you so that you will suffer the weeds to grow up all about you, without your having the heart to set your mind to the work of having the place made neat. The state of a man's garden is a very delicate and sensitive test as to whether he is keeping hopeful and well-to-do. It is to me a very sad sight to see a parsonage getting a dilapidated look, and the gravel walks in its garden growing weedy. The parson must be growing old and poor. The parishioners tell you how trim and orderly everything was when he came first to the parish. But his affairs have become embarrassed, or his wife and children are dead ; and though still doing his duty well and faithfully, he has lost heart and interest in these little matters ; and so things are as you see.

I have been amused by the way in which some people meet disappointment. They think it a great piece of worldly wisdom to deny that they have ever been disappointed at all. Perhaps it might be so, if



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the pretext were less transparent than it 'is. An old lady's son is plucked at an examination for a civil appointment. She takes up the ground that it is rather a credit to be plucked ; that nearly everybody is plucked ; that all the cleverest fellows are plucked ; and that only stupid fellows are allowed to pass. When the examiners find a clever man, they take a pleasure in plucking him. A number of the cleverest men in England can easily put out a lad of one-and-twenty. Then, shifting her ground, she declares the examination was ridiculously easy : her son was rejected because he could not tell what two and two amount to : because he did not know the name of the river on which London is built : because he did not (in his confusion) know his own name. She shows you the indignant letter which the young man wrote to her, announcing the scandalous injustice with which he was treated. You remark three words misspelt in the first five lines ; and you fancy you have fathomed the secret of the plucking.

I have sometimes tried, but in vain, to discover the law which regulates the attainment of extreme popularity. Extreme popularity, in this country and age, appears a very arbitrary thing. I defy any person to predict *à priori* what book, or song, or play, or picture, is to become the rage—to utterly transcend all competition. I believe, indeed, that there cannot be popularity for even a short time,

without some kind or degree of merit to deserve it ; and in any case there is no other standard to which one can appeal than the deliberate judgment of the mass of educated persons. If you are quite convinced that a thing is bad which all such think good, why, of course you are wrong. If you honestly think Shakspeare a fool, you are aware you must be mistaken. And so, if a book, or a picture, or a play, or a song, be really good, and if it be properly brought before the public notice, you may, as a general rule, predict that it will attain a certain measure of success. But the inexplicable thing—the thing of which I am quite unable to trace the law—is *extreme* success. How is it that one thing shoots ahead of everything else of the same class ; and without being materially better, or even materially different, leaves everything else out of sight behind ? Why is it that Eclipse is first and the rest nowhere, while the legs and wind of Eclipse are no whit better than the legs and wind of all the rest ? If twenty novels of nearly equal merit are published, it is not impossible that one shall dart ahead of the remaining nineteen ; that it shall be found in every library ; that Mr. Mudie may announce that he has 3250 copies of it ; that it shall be the talk of every circle ; its incidents set to music, its plot dramatized ; that it shall count readers by thousands while others count readers by scores ; while yet one cannot really see why any of the others might not have

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taken its place. Or of a score of coarse comic-songs, nineteen shall never get beyond the walls of the Cyder Cellars (I understand there is a place of the name), while the twentieth, no wise superior in any respect, comes to be sung about the streets, known by everybody, turned into polkas and quadrilles, and in fact to become for the time one of the institutions of this great and intelligent country. I remember how, a year or two since, that contemptible *Ratcatcher's Daughter*, without a thing to recommend it, with no music, no wit, no sentiment, nothing but vulgar brutality, might be heard in every separate town of England and Scotland, sung about the streets by every ragged urchin; while the other songs of the vivacious Cowell fell dead from his lips. The will of the sovereign people has decided that so it shall be. And as likings and dislikings in most cases are things strongly felt, but impossible to account for even by the person who feels them, so is it with the enormous admiration, regard, and success which fall to the lot of many to whom popularity is success. Actors, statesmen, authors, preachers, have often in England their day of quite undeserved popular ovation; and by and by their day of entire neglect. It is the rocket and the stick. We are told that Bishop Butler, at a time of great political disturbance in Europe, was walking in his garden with his chaplain. After a long fit of musing, the Bishop turned

to the 'chaplain, and asked the question whether nations might not go mad, as well as individuals? Classes of society, I think, may certainly have attacks of temporary insanity on some one point. The Jenny Lind fever was such an attack. Such was the popularity of the boy-actor Betty. Such the popularity of the Small Coal Man some time in the last century; such that of the hippopotamus at the Regent's Park; such that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

But this essay must have an end. It is far too long already. I am tired of it, and *à fortiori* my reader must be too. Let me try the effect of an abrupt conclusion.

## CHAPTER III.

## CONCERNING GIVING UP AND COMING DOWN.

**N**OT so very much depends upon a beginning, after all. The inexperienced writer racks his brain for something striking to set out with. He is anxious to make a good impression at first. He fancies that unless you hook your reader by your first sentence, your reader will break away ; making up his mind that what you have got to say is not worth the reading. Now, it cannot be doubted that a preacher, who is desirous of keeping his congregation in that dead silence and fixedness of attention which one sometimes sees in church, must, as a general rule, produce that audible hush by his first sentence if he is to produce it at all. If people in church are permitted for even one minute at the beginning of the sermon to settle themselves, bodily and mentally, into the attitude of inattention, and of thinking of something other than the preacher's words, the preacher will hardly catch them up again.

He will hardly, by any amount of earnestness, eloquence, pointedness, or oddity, gain that universal and sympathetic interest of which he flung away his chance by some long, involved, indirect, and dull sentence at starting. But the writer is not tried by so exacting a standard. Most readers will glance over the first few pages of a book before throwing it aside as stupid. The writer may overcome the evil effect of a first sentence, or even a first paragraph, which may have been awkward, ugly, dull—yea, silly. I could name several very popular works which set out in a most unpromising way. I particularly dislike the first sentence of *Adam Bede*, but it is redeemed by hundreds of noble ones. It is not certain that the express train which is to devour the four hundred miles between London and Edinburgh in ten hours, shall run its first hundred yards much faster than the lagging parliamentary. There can be no question that the man whom all first visitants of the House of Commons are most eager to see and hear is Mr. Disraeli. He is the lord of debate: not unrivalled perhaps, but certainly unsurpassed. Yet everybody knows he made a very poor beginning. In short, my reader, if something that is really good is to follow, a bad outset may be excused.

One readily believes what one wishes to believe; and I wish to hold by this principle. For I have accumulated many thoughts *Concerning Giving up and Coming Down*; and I have got them lying upon

this table, noted down on six long slips of paper. I vainly fancy that I have certain true and useful things to say ; but I have experienced extraordinary difficulty in deciding how I should begin to say them. I have sat this morning by the fireside for an hour, looking intently at the glowing coals; but though I could think of many things to say about the middle of my essay, I could think of nothing satisfactory with which to begin it. But comfort came as the thought gradually developed itself, that it really mattered very little how the essay might be begun, provided it went on; and, above all, ended. A dull beginning will probably be excused to the essayist more readily than to the writer whose sole purpose is to amuse. The essayist pleases himself with the belief that his readers are by several degrees more intelligent and thoughtful than the ordinary readers of ordinary novels ; and that many of them, if they find thoughts which are just and practical, will regard as a secondary matter the order in which these thoughts come. The sheep's head of northern cookery has not, at the first glance, an attractive aspect: nor is the nutriment it affords very symmetrically arranged: but still, as Dr. John Brown has beautifully remarked, it supplies a deal of *fine confused feeding*. I look at my six pieces of paper, closely written over in a very small hand. They seem to me as the sheep's head. There is feeding *there*, albeit somewhat confused. It matters not

much where we shall begin. Come, my friendly reader, and partake of the homely fare.

The great lesson which the wise and true man is learning through life, is, How to COME DOWN without GIVING UP. Reckless and foolish people confuse these two things. It is far easier to Give Up than to Come Down. It is far less repugnant to our natural self-conceit. It befits much better our natural laziness. It enables us to fancy ourselves heroic, when in truth we are vain, slothful, and fretful. I have not words to express my belief on this matter so strongly as I feel it. Oh! I venerate the man who with a heart unsoured has Come Down, and Come Down far, but who never will Give Up!

I fancy my reader wondering at my excitement, and doubtful of my meaning. Let me explain my terms. What is meant by Giving Up: what by Coming Down?

By Coming Down I understand *this*: Learning from the many mortifications, disappointments, and rebuffs which we must all meet as we go on through life, to think more and more humbly of ourselves, intellectually, morally, socially, physically, æsthetically: yet, while thinking thus humbly of ourselves and our powers, to resolve that we shall continue to do our very best: and all this with a kindly heart and a contented mind. Such is my ideal of true and Christian Coming Down: and I regard as a



true hero the man who does it rightly. It is a noble thing for a man to say to himself, 'I am not at all what I had vainly fancied myself: my mark is far, very far lower than I thought it had been: I had fancied myself a great genius, but I find I am only a man of decent ability: I had fancied myself a man of great weight in the county, but I find I have very little influence indeed: I had fancied that my stature was six feet four, but I find I am only five feet two: I had fancied that in such a competition I never could be beaten, but in truth I have been sadly beaten: I had fancied [suffer me, reader, the solemn allusion] that my Master had entrusted me with ten talents, but I find I have no more than one. But I will accept the humble level which is mine by right, and with God's help I will do my very best there. I will not kick dogs nor curse servants: I will not try to detract from the standing of men who are cleverer, more eminent, or taller than myself: I will heartily wish them well. I will not grow soured, moping, and misanthropic. I know I am beaten and disappointed, but I will hold on manfully still, and never Give Up.' Such, kindly reader, is Christian Coming Down!

And what is Giving Up? Of course you understand my meaning now. Giving Up means that when you are beaten and disappointed, and made to understand that your mark is lower than you had fancied, you will throw down your arms in despair, and

resolve that you will try no more. As for you, brave man, if you don't get all you want, you are resolved you shall have nothing. If you are not accepted as the cleverest and greatest man, you are resolved you shall be no man at all. And while the other is Christian Coming Down, *this* is un-Christian, foolish, and wicked Giving Up. No doubt, it is an extremely natural thing. It is the first and readiest impulse of the undisciplined heart. It is in human nature to say, 'If I don't have all the pudding, I shall have none.' The grand way of expressing the same sentiment, is, *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*. Of course the Latin words stir the youthful heart. You sympathise with them, I know, my reader under five-and-twenty. You will see through them some day. They are just the heroic way of saying, I shall Give Up, but I never shall Come Down! They state a sentiment for babies, boys, and girls, not for reasonable women and men. For babies, I say. Let me relate a parable. Yesterday I went into a cottage, where a child of two years old sat upon his mother's knee. The little man had in his hand a large slice of bread-and-butter which his mother had just given him. By words not intelligible to me, he conveyed to his mother the fact that he desired that jam should be spread upon the slice of bread-and-butter. But his mother informed him that bread-and-butter must suffice, without the further luxury. The young human being (how

thoroughly human) considered for a moment; and then dashed the bread-and-butter to the further end of the room. There it was: *Aut Cæsar aut nullus!* The baby would Give Up, but it would not Come Down! Alexander the Great, look at yourself! Marius among the ruins of Carthage, what do you think you look like here? By the time the youthful reader comes to understand that Byron's dark, mysterious heroes, however brilliantly set forth, are in conception simply childish; by the time he is able to appreciate *Philip Van Artevelde* (I mean Mr. Henry Taylor's noble tragedy); he will discern that various things which look heroic at the first glance, will not *work* in the long run. And that practical principle is irrational which will not work. And that sentiment which is irrational is not heroic. The truly-heroic thing to say, as well as the rational thing, is this: If I don't get all the pudding, I shall be content if I get what I deserve, or what God sends. If I am not *Cæsar*, there is no need that I should be *nullus*: I shall be content to be the highly respectable Mr. Smith. Though I am not equal to Shakspeare, I may write a good play. Though inferior to Bishop Wilberforce, I shall yet do my best to be a good preacher. It is a fine thing, a noble thing, as it appears to me, for a man to be content to labour hard and do his utmost, though well aware that the result will be no more than decent mediocrity, after all. It is a finer thing, and

more truly heroic, to do your very best and only be second-rate, than even to resolve, like the man in the *Iliad*,

Αὐτὸν ἀριστεύειν, καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων.

There is a strain put upon the moral nature in contentedly and perseveringly doing this, greater than is put upon the intellectual by the successful effort to be best. And what would become of the world if all men went upon Homer's principle ; and rather than Come Down from its sublime elevation, would fling down their tools and Give Up ? Shall I, because I cannot preach like Mr. Melvill, cease to write sermons ? Or shall I, because I cannot counsel and charm like Mr. Helps, cease to write essays ? You may rely upon it I shall not. I do not forget Who said, in words of praise concerning one who had done what was absolutely but very little, 'She hath done what she could !' And what would become of me and my essays, if the reader, turning to them from the pages of Hazlitt or Charles Lamb, should say, 'I shall not Come Down ; and if I find I have to do so I shall Give Up ?' What if the reader refused to accept the plain bread-and-butter which I can furnish, unless it should be accompanied by that jam which I am not able to add ?

Giving Up, then, is the doing of mortified self-conceit, of sulky pettishness, of impatience, of

recklessness, of desperation. It says virtually to the Great Disposer of Events, 'Everything in this world must go exactly as I wish it, or I shall sit down and die.' It is of the nature of a moral strike. But Coming Down generally means coming to juster and sounder views of one's self and one's own importance and usefulness; and if you come down gracefully, genially, and Christianly, you work on diligently and cheerfully at that lower level. No doubt, to come down is a tremendous trial; it is a sore mortification. But trials and mortifications, my reader, are useful things for you and me. The hasty man, when obliged to Come Down, is ready to conclude that he may as well Give Up. In some matters it is a harder thing to go the one mile and stop at the end of it, than to go the twain. It is much more difficult to stop decidedly halfway down a very steep descent, than to go all the way. If you are beaten in some competition, it is much easier to resolve recklessly that you will never try again, than to set manfully to work, with humbler views of yourself, and try once more. Wisdom Comes Down: folly Gives Up. Wisdom, I say, Comes Down; for I think there can be little doubt that most men, in order to think rightly of themselves, must come to think much more humbly of themselves than they are naturally disposed to do. Few men estimate themselves too lowly. Even people who lack confidence in themselves are not without a great measure

of latent self-esteem ; and, indeed, it is natural enough that men should rate themselves too high, till experience compels them to Come Down.\* I am talking of even sensible and worthy men. They know they have worked hard ; they know that what they have done has cost them great pains ; they look with instinctive partiality at the results they have accomplished ; they are sure these results are good, and they do not know *how* good till they learn by comparative trial. But when the comparative trial comes, there are few who do not meet their match—few who do not find it needful to Come Down. Perhaps even Shakspeare felt he must Come Down a little, when he looked into one or two of Christopher Marlowe's plays. Clever boys at school, and clever lads at college, naturally think their own little circle of the cleverest boys or lads to contain some of the cleverest fellows in the world. They know how well they can do many things, and how hard they have worked to do them so well. Of course they will have to Come Down, after longer experience of life. It is not that the set who ranked first among their young companions are not clever fellows ; but the world is wide and its population is big, and they will fall in with cleverer fellows still. It is not that the Head boy does not write Greek Iambics well, but it will go hard but somewhere he will find some one who will write them better. They are rare exceptions in the race of mankind who, however good they

may be, and however admirably they may do some one thing, will not some day meet their match — meet their superior, and so have painfully to Come Down. And, so far as my own experience has gone, I have found that the very, very few, who never meet a Taking Down, who are first at school, then first at college, then first in life, seem by God's appointment to have been so happily framed that they could do without it; that to think justly of themselves they did not need to Come Down; that their modesty and humility equalled their merit; and that (though not unconscious of their powers and their success) they remained, amid the incense of applause which would have intoxicated others, unaffected, genial, and unspoiled.

People who lead a quiet country life amid their own belongings, seeing little of those of bigger men, insensibly form so excessive an estimate of their personal possessions as lays them open to the risk of many disagreeable Takings Down. You, solitary scholar in the country parsonage, have lived for six months among your books till you have come to fancy them quite a great library. But you pay a visit to some wealthy man of literary tastes. You see his fine editions, his gorgeous bindings, his carved oak bookcases; and when you return home you will have to contend with a temptation to be disgusted with your own little collection of books. Now, if you are a wise man, you will Come Down,

but you won't Give Up ; you will admit to yourself that your library is not quite what you had grown to think it, but you will hold that it is a fair library after all. When you go and see the grand acres of evergreens at some fine country house, do not return mortified at the prospect of your own little shrubbery which looked so fine in the morning before you set out. When you have beheld Mr. Smith's fine thoroughbreds, resist the impulse to whack your own poor steed. Rather pat the poor thing's neck : gracefully Come Down. It was a fine thing, Cato, banished from Rome, yet having his little senate at Utica. He had been compelled to Come Down indeed, but he clung to the dear old institution : he would not Give Up. I have enjoyed the spectacle of a lady, brought up in a noble baronial dwelling, living in a pretty little parsonage, and quite pleased and happy there ; not sulking, not fretting, not talking like an idiot of 'what she had been accustomed to,' but heartily reconciling herself to simpler things—Coming Down, in short, but never dreaming of Giving Up. So have I esteemed the clergyman like Sydney Smith, who had commanded the attention of crowded congregations of educated folk, of gentlemen and gentlewomen, yet who works faithfully and cheerfully in a rural parish, and prepares his sermons diligently, with the honest desire to make them interesting and instructive to a handful of simple country people. Of



course he knows that he has Come Down, but he does not dream of Giving Up.

There is in human nature a curious tendency to think that if you are obliged to fall, or if you have fallen, a good deal, you may just as well go all the way; and it would be hard to reckon the amount of misery and ruin which have resulted from this mistaken fancy, that if you have Come Down, you may Give Up at once. A poor man, possibly under some temptation that does not come once in ten years, gets tipsy; walking along in that state he meets the parish clergyman; the clergyman's eye rests on him in sorrow and reproach. The poor man is heartily ashamed; he is brought to a point at which he may turn the right way or the wrong way. He has not read this essay, and he takes the wrong. He thinks he has been so bad, he cannot be worse. He goes home and thrashes his wife; he ceases attending church; he takes his children from school: he begins to go to destruction. All this founts on his erroneously imagining that you cannot Come Down without Giving Up. But I believe that, in truth, as the general rule, the fatal and shameful deed on which a man must look back in bitterness and sorrow all his life, was done *after* the point at which he grew reckless. It was *because* he had Given Up that he took the final desperate step; he did not Give Up because he had taken it. The man did a really desperate deed because he

thought wrongly that he had done a desperate deed already, and could not now be any worse; and sad as are intellectual and social Coming Down, and likely to result in Giving Up as these are, they are not half so sad nor half so perilous as moral Coming Down. It must indeed be a miserable thing for man or woman to feel that they have done something which will shame all after life—something which will never let them hold up their head again, something which will make them (to use the expressive language of Scripture) ‘go softly all their days.’ Well, let such Come Down; let them learn to be humble and penitent; but for any sake don’t let them Give Up! *That* is the great Tempter’s last and worst suggestion. *His* suggestion to the fallen man or woman is, You are now so bad that you cannot be worse—you had better Give Up at once: and Judas listened to it and went and hanged himself; and the poor Magdalen, fallen far, but with a deep abyss beneath her yet, steals at midnight to the dark arch and the dark river, with the bitter desperate resolution of Hood’s noble poem, ‘Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!’ I remember an amusing exemplification of the natural tendency to think that having Come Down you must Give Up, in a play in which I once saw Keeley in my play-going days. He fancied that he had (unintentionally) killed a man: his horror was extreme. Soon after, by another mischance, he killed (as he is led

to believe) another man : his horror is redoubled ; but now there mingles with it a reckless desperation. Having done such dreadful things, he concludes that he cannot be worse, whatever he may do. Having Come so far Down, he thinks he may as well Give Up ; and so the little fat man exclaims, with a fiendish laugh, ‘ Now I think I had better kill somebody else ! ’ Ah, how true to nature ! The plump desperado was at the moment beyond remembering that the sound view of the case was, that if he had done so much mischief it was the more incumbent on him to do no more. The poor lad in a counting-house who well-nigh breaks his mother’s heart by taking a little money not his own, need not break it outright by going entirely to ruin. Rather gather yourself up from your fall. Though the sky-scraping spars are gone, we may rig a jury-mast :

And from the wreck, far scattered o’er the rocks,  
Build us a little bark of hope once more.

We are being taught all through life to Come Down in our anticipations, our self-estimation, our ambition. We aim high at first. Children expect to be kings, or at least to be always eating plum-pudding and drinking cream. Clever boys expect to be great and famous men. They come gradually to soberer views and hopes. Our vanity and self-love and romance are cut in upon day by day : step by step we Come Down, but, if we are wise, we

never Give Up. We hold on steadfastly still: we try to do our best. The painful discipline begins early. The other day I was at our sewing-school. A very little girl came up with great pride to show me her work. It was very badly done, poor little thing. I tried to put the fact as kindly as possible; but of course I was obliged to say that the sewing was not quite so good as she would be able to do some day. I saw the eyes fill and the lips quiver; there were mortification and disappointment in the little heart. I saw the temptation to be petted, to throw the work aside—to Give Up. But better thoughts prevailed. She felt she must Come Down. She went away silently to her place and patiently tried to do better. Ah, thought I to myself, There is a lesson for *you*!

Let me think now of Intellectual Giving Up and Coming Down.

I do not suppose that a thorough blockhead can ever know the pain of Intellectual Coming Down. From his first schooldays he has been made to understand that he is a blockhead, and he does not think of entering himself to run against clever men. A large dray-horse is saved the mortification of being beaten for the Derby; for he does not propose to run for the Derby. The pain of Intellectual Coming Down is felt by the really clever man, who is made to feel that he is not so clever as he had imagined: that whereas he had fancied himself a

first-class man, he is no more than a third-class one ; or that, even though he be a man of good ability, and capable of doing his own work well, there are others who can do it much better than he. You would not like, my clever reader, to be told that not much is expected of you ; that no one supposes that you can write, ride, walk, or leap like Smith. There was something that touched one in that letter which Mr. R. H. Horne wrote to the *Times* explaining how he was going away to Australia because his poetry was neglected and unappreciated. What slow, painful years the poet must have gone through before he thus resolved to Give Up ! I never read *Orion* ; and living among simple people, I never knew any one who had read that work. It may be a work of great genius. But the poet insisted on Giving Up when, perhaps, the right thing for him was to have Come Down. Perhaps he over-estimated himself and his poetry ; perhaps it met all the notice it deserved. The poet stated, in his published letter, that his writings had been most favourably received by high-class critics ; but he was going away because the public treated him with entire neglect. Nobody read him, or cared for him, or talked about him. ‘And what did the learned world say to your paradoxes ?’ asked good Dr. Primrose ; but his son’s reply was, ‘The learned world said nothing at all to my paradoxes.’ Such appears to have been the case with Mr. Horne ; and so he

grew misanthropic, and shook from his feet the dust of Britain. He Gave Up, in short ; but he refused to Come Down. And no doubt it is easier to go off to the wilderness at once than to conclude that you are only a middling man after having long regarded yourself as a great genius. It must be a sad thing for an actor who came out as a new Kean, to gradually make up his mind that he is just a respectable, pains-taking person, who never will draw crowds and take the town by storm. Many struggles must the poor barrister know before he Comes Down from trying for the Great Seal, and aims at being a police magistrate. So with the painter ; and you remember how poor Haydon refused to Come Down, and desperately Gave Up. It cannot be denied that, to the man of real talent, it is a most painful trial to intellectually Come Down ; and that trial is attended with a strong temptation to Give Up. Really clever men not unfrequently have a quite preposterous estimate of their own abilities ; and many Takings Down are needful to drive them out of *that*. And men who are essentially middling men intellectually, sometimes have first-class ambition along with third-rate powers ; and these coming together make a most ill-matched pair of legs, which bear a human being very awkwardly along his path in life, and expose him to numberless mortifications. It is hard to feel any deep sympathy for such men, though their sufferings must be great. And, unhappily,

such men, when compelled to Come Down, not unfrequently attempt by malicious arts to pull down to their own level those to whose level they are unable to rise. I have sometimes fancied one could almost see the venomous vapours coming visibly from the mouth of a malignant, commonplace, ambitious man, when talking of one more able and more successful than himself.

Possibly Social Coming Down is even more painful than Intellectual. It is very sad to see, as we sometimes do, the father of a family die, and his children in consequence lose their grade in society. I do not mean, merely have to move to a smaller house, and put down their carriage; for all *that* may be while social position remains unchanged. I mean, drop out of the acquaintance of their father's friends; fall into the society of coarse, inferior people; be addressed on a footing of equality by persons with whom they have no feelings or thoughts in common; be compelled to sordid shifts and menial work and frowsy chambers. Threadbare carpets and rickety chairs often indicate privation as extreme as shoeless feet and a coat out at elbows. We might probably smile at people who felt the painfulness of Coming Down, because obliged to pass from one set to another in the society of some little country town, where the second circle is not unfrequently (to a stranger's view) very superior to the first in appearance, manners, and means. But there is one line

which it must cause a parent real anguish to make up his mind that his children are to fall below after having been brought up above it: I mean the one essentially impassable line of society—the line which parts the educated, well-bred gentleman from the man who is not such. There is something terrible about *that* Giving Up. And how such as have ever known it, cling to the upper side of the line of demarcation! We have all seen how people work and pinch and screw to maintain a decent appearance before the world, while things were bare and scanty enough at home. And it is an honest and commendable pride that makes the poor widow, of small means but with the training and feeling of a lady, determine never to Give Up the notion that her daughters shall be ladies too. It need not be said that such a determination is not at all inconsistent with the most stringent economy or the most resolute industry on her own or her girls' part. I did not sympathise with a letter which a well-known philanthropist lately published in the *Times*, in which he urged that people with no more than three hundred a-year\* should at once resolve to send their daughters out as menial servants, instead of fighting for the position of ladies for them. I thought, and I think, that *that* letter showed less than its author's usual genial feeling, less than his usual sound sense. Kind and judicious men will probably believe that a good man's or woman's resistance to Social Coming Down,



and especially to Social Giving Up, is deserving of all respect and sympathy. A poor clergyman, or a poor military man, may have no more than three hundred a-year; but I heartily venerate his endeavours to preserve his girls from the society of the servants' hall and the delicate attentions of Jeames. The world may yet think differently, and manual or menial work may be recognised as not involving Social Giving Up: but meanwhile the step is a vast one, between the poorest governess and the plumpest housemaid.

A painful form of Social Coming Down falls to the lot of many women when they get married. I suppose young girls generally have in their mind a glorified ideal of the husband whom they are to find; wonderfully handsome, wonderfully clever, very kind and affectionate, probably very rich and famous. Sad pressure must be put upon a worthy woman's heart before she can resolve to give up all romantic fancies, and marry purely for money. There must be sad pressure before a young girl can so far Come Down as to resolve to marry some man who is an old and ugly fool. Yet how many do! No doubt, reader, you have sometimes seen couples who were paired, but not matched; a beautiful young creature tied to a foul old satyr. Was not your reflection, as you looked at the poor wife's face, 'Ah! how wretchedly you must have Come Down.' And even when the husband is really a good old creature, you

cannot but think how different that punchy, snuffy, and stertorous animal\* is from the fair ideal of a girl's first fancy. Before making up her mind to such a partner as that, the young woman had a good deal to Give Up. And probably men, if of an imaginative turn, have, when they get married, to Come Down a good deal too. I do not suppose anything about the clever man's wife but what is very good; but surely she is not always the sympathetic, admiring companion of his early visions. Think of the great author, walking in the summer fields, and saying to his wife, as he looked at the frisking lambs, that they seemed so innocent and happy that he did not wonder that in all ages the lamb has been taken as the emblem of happiness and innocence. Think of the revulsion in his mind when the thoughtful lady replied, after some reflection, 'Yes, lamb is very nice, especially with mint sauce!' The great man had no doubt already Come Down very much in his expectation of finding in his wife a sympathetic companion; but after *that*, he would probably Give Up altogether. Still, it is possibly less painful for a clever man to find, as years go on, and life sobers into the prosaic, that he must Come Down sadly in his ideas of the happiness of wedded life, than it is for such a man fairly to Give Up before marriage, making up his mind that in *that* matter, as in most others, men must be content with what they can get, though it be very inferior to what they

could wish. I feel a great disgust for what may be called sentimentality; in practical life sentimental people, and people who talk sentimentally, are invariably fools; still it appears to me that there is sober truth in the following lines, which I remember to have read somewhere or other, though the truth be somewhat sickly and sentimentally expressed:—

And as the dove, to far Palmyra flying,  
 From where her native founts of Antioch gleam,  
 Weary, exhausted, longing, panting, sighing,  
 Lights sadly at the desert's bitter stream;  
 So many a soul, o'er life's drear desert faring,—  
 Love's pure, congenial spring unfound, unquaffed,—  
 Suffers, recoils, then, thirsty and despairing  
 Of what it would, descends and sips the nearest draught.

Most people find it painful to Come Down in the matter of Growing Old. Most men and women cling, as long as may be, to the belief that they are still quite young, or at least not so very old. Let us respect the clinging to youth: there seems to me much that is good in it. It is an unconscious testimony to the depth and universality of the conviction that, as time goes on, we are leaving behind us the more guileless, innocent, and impressionable season of our life. We feel little sympathy, indeed, for the silly old woman who affects the airs and graces of a girl of seventeen: who makes her daughters attire themselves like children when they are quite grown up; and who renders herself ridiculous in low dresses and a capless head when her

head is half bald and her shoulders like an uncooked plucked fowl. *That* is downright offensive and revolting. And to see such an individual surrounded by a circle of young lads to whom she is talking in a buoyant and flirting manner, is as melancholy an exhibition of human folly as can anywhere be seen. But it is quite a different thing when man or woman, thoughtful, earnest, and pious, sits down and muses at the sight of the first gray hairs. Here is the slight shadow, we think, of a certain Great Event which is to come ; here is the earliest touch of a chill hand which must prevail at length. Here is manifest decay : we have begun to die. And no worthy human being will pretend that this is other than a very solemn thought. And we look back as well as forward : how short a time since we were little children, and kind hands smoothed down the locks now growing scanty and gray ! You cannot recognise in the glass, when you see the careworn, anxious face, the smooth features of the careless child. You feel you must Come Down : you are young no more ! Yet you know by what shifts people seek in this respect to avoid Coming Down. We postpone, year after year, the point at which people cease to be young. We are pleased when we find people talking of men above thirty as young men. Once, indeed, Sir Robert Peel spoke of Lord Derby at forty-five as a man in 'the buoyancy of youth.' Many men of five-and-forty would

feel a secret elation as they read the words thus employed. The present writer wants a good deal yet of being Half-way ; yet he remembers how much obliged he felt to Mr. Dickens for describing Toin Pinch in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (in an advertisement to be put in the *Times*) as ‘ a respectable young man, aged thirty-five.’ You remember how Sir Bulwer Lytton, as he has himself grown older, has made the heroes of his novels grow older *pari passu*. Many years ago his romantic heroes were lads of twenty ; *now* they are always sentimental men of fifty. And in all this we can trace a natural conviction of the intellect, as well as the natural disinclination in any respect to Come Down. For youth, with all its folly, is by common consent regarded as a better thing than age, with all its experience : and thus to grow old is regarded as Coming Down. And there is something very touching, something to be respected and sympathised with by all people in the vigour of life, in the fashion in which men who have Come Down so far as to admit that they have grown old, refuse to Give Up by admitting that they are past their work ; and indeed persist in maintaining, after fifty years in the Church or thirty on the Bench, that they are as strong as ever. Let us reverence the old man. Let us help him in his determination not to Give Up. Let us lighten his burden when we can do so, and then give him credit for bearing it

all himself. If there be one respect in which it is especially interesting and respectable when a man refuses to Give Up at any price, and indeed is most unwilling to Come Down, it is in the regard of useful, honest labour in the service of God and man. Sometimes the unwillingness to Come Down in any degree is amusing, and almost provoking. I remember once, descending a long flight of steps from a railway station, I saw a venerable dignitary of the Church, who had served it for more than sixty years, coming down with difficulty, and clinging to the railing. Now, what I ought to have done was, to remain out of his view, and see that he got safely down without making him aware that I was watching him. But I hastily went up to him and begged him to take my arm, as the stair was so slippery and steep. I think I see the indignation of the good man's look. 'I assure you,' he replied, 'my friend, I am quite as able to walk down the steps alone as you are!'

Apart from the more dignified regrets which accompany the Coming Down of growing old, there are petty mortifications which vain people will feel as they are obliged to Come Down in their views as to their personal appearance. 'As a man's hair falls off, as he grows unwieldily stout, as he comes to blow like a porpoise in ascending a hill, as his voice cracks when he tries to sing, he is obliged step by step to Come Down. I heartily despise the contemptible

creature who refuses to Come Down when nature bids him : whodyes his hair and his moustache, rouges his face, wears stays, and pads out his chest. Yet more disgusting is the made-up old reprobate when, padded, rouged, and dyed, as already said, he mingles in a circle of fast young men, and disgusts even them by the foul pruriency of his talk. Kick him out, muscular Christian ! Tell him what you think of him, and see how the despicable wretch will cower ! But while this refusing to Come gracefully Down as to physical aspect with advancing time is thoroughly abominable, let it be remembered that even in this matter the judicious man will not Give Up, though he will Come Down. Don't grow slovenly and careless as you grow old. Be scrupulously neat and tidy in dress. It is a pleasant sight—pleasant like the trimly-raked field of autumn, the speckless, trim, white-neckclothed, well-dressed old man !

That we may wisely Come Down, we need frequently to be reminded that we ought to do so. We need, in fact, a good many Takings Down as we go on through life, or we should all become insufferable. I speak of ordinary men. The old vanity keeps growing up ; and like the grass of a lawn, it needs to be often mown down ; and however frequently and close it is mown, there will always (as with the lawn) be quite enough of it. You meet with some wholesome, mortifying lesson ; you feel

you must Come Down ; and you do. You think humbly and reasonably of yourself for a while. But the grass is growing again : your self-estimation is getting up again ; you are beginning to think yourself very clever, great, and eminent, when some rude shock undeceives you. You are roughly compelled to think of yourself more meekly. You find that in the general judgment you are no great author, artist, actor, cricket-player, shot, essay writer, preacher. You are so mortified that you think you may at once Give Up ; but, after deliberating, you resolve that you will only Come Down.

Great men have no doubt Given Up ; but it was either in some time of morbid depression, or when it was really unavoidable that they should do so. Pitt Gave Up when on his dying bed he heard of several great victories of the First Napoleon ; and, crying out with his blackening lips, ‘ *Roll up the map of Europe,*’ turned his face to the wall and never spoke more. Sir Robert Peel Gave Up, when he tendered to the Queen his final resignation of office. When the Queen asked him if there was nothing he could wish her to do in testimony of her regard for him, his answer was—‘ Only that your Majesty would never call me to your councils again !’ What a Giving Up for that ambitious man ? Notwithstanding what has already been said in this essay, I am not, on reflection, sure that Marius had Given Up, or even Come Down, when he sat,



in his lowest depression of fortune, amid the ruins of Carthage. Gelimer had finally Given Up when he was carried as a captive in the Roman triumph, looking with a smile upon all the pomp of the grand procession, and often exclaiming, 'Vanity, vanity: all is vanity!' But Diocletian, busy among his cabbages, interested and content though the purple had been flung aside, had neither Given Up nor Come Down. Nor had Charles V. done either in that beautiful retreat which Mr. Stirling has so gracefully described. There was no Coming Down *there*, in the loss of self-estimation: there was no Giving Up, in the bitter and despairing sense, when the greatest monarch of the great sixteenth century, in his greatest eminence, calmly laid down the cares of royalty, that in his last days he might enjoy quiet, and have space in which to prepare for the other world. It was only that 'the royal eagle would rest his weary wings.'

But we have all known very small men who were always ready to Give Up, rather than that their silly vanity should be mortified by any degree of Coming Down. We have all known cases highly analogous to that of the little child who threw away his bread-and-butter, because he could not have jelly too. I dare say, my reader, you may have seen a man who if he were not allowed to be the first man in some little company, the only talker, the only singer, the only philosopher, or the only


jack-pudding, would Give Up, and sit entirely silent. In his own small way, he must be *aut Cæsar aut nullus*. A rival talker, singer, or mountebank, turns him pale with envy and wrath. Of course all this founds on extreme pettiness of character, co-existing with inordinate vanity and silliness. And it is an offence which is its own severe punishment. The petty sin whips itself with a stinging scourge of packthread.

I have sometimes thought that is a remarkable thing, how very quickly human beings can quite Give Up. An entire revolution may pass in a few hours, perhaps in a few minutes, upon our whole estimate of things. I should judge that a soldier, charging some perilous position in a delirium of excitement, and fancying military glory the sublimest thing in life; if he suddenly be disabled by some ghastly wound, and is borne away to the rear deadly sick, fevered, and wrung with agony, would Give Up many notions which he had cherished a little before. But I have been especially struck by witnessing how fast men can resign themselves to the last and largest Giving Up: how quickly they can make up their mind that they are dying, and that all will be over in two or three hours. A man stricken with cholera at morning, and gone before night, has not the feeling that his death is sudden. When eternity comes very near, this world and all its concerns are speedily discerned as little more

than shadows. We Give Up quickly, and with little effort, all those things and fancies and opinions to which we clung very closely in health and life. The dying man feels that to him these are not. A Christian man, busy in the morning at his usual work, and smitten down at mid-day by some fatal disease or accident, could be quite resigned to die at evening. He may have had a hundred plans in his mind at daybreak : but it would cost him little effort to Give them all Up. And but for the dear ones he must leave behind, a very short time would suffice to resign a pious man to the *Nunc dimittis*. We grow accustomed, wonderfully fast, to the most new and surprising things.

But returning to matters less solemn, let me sum up what has been said so far, by repeating my grand principle, that in most cases the wise and good man will Come Down, but never Give Up. The heroic thing to say is this : Things are bad, but they may be worse ; and with God's blessing I shall try to make them better. Who does not know that by resolute adherence to this principle, many battles have been won after they had been lost ? Don't the French say that the English have conquered on many fields because they did not know when they had been beaten ; in short, because they would never Give Up ? Pluck is a great quality. Let us respect it everywhere ; at least wherever enlisted on

the side of right. Ugly is the bull-dog, and indeed blackguard-looking; but I admire one thing about it; it will never Give Up. And splendid success has often come at length to the man who fought on through failure, hoping against hope. Mr. Disraeli might well have Given Up after his first speech in the House of Commons: many men would never have opened their lips there again. I declare I feel something sublime in that defiant *The day will come when you will be glad to hear me*, when we read it by the light of after events. Of course only extraordinary success could justify the words. They might have been the vapouring of a conceited fool. Galileo, compelled to appear to Come Down, did not Give Up: *Still it moves*. The great nonconformist preacher, Robert Hall, fairly broke down in his first attempt to preach; but he did not Give Up. Mr. Tennyson might have Given Up, had he been disheartened by the sharp reviews of his earliest volume. George Stephenson might almost have Given Up, when his railway and his locomotive were laughed out of the Parliamentary Committee. Mr. Thackeray might have Given Up when the publishers refused to have anything to do with *Vanity Fair*. The first articles of men who have become most successful periodical writers, have been consigned to the Balaam-box. Possibly this was in some measure the cause of their success. It taught them to take more pains. It was a Taking Down.



It showed them that their task was not so easy : if they would succeed they must do their very best. And if they had stamina to resolve that though Taken Down they would not Give Up, the early disappointment was an excellent discipline. I have known students at College whose success in carrying off honours was unexampled, who in their first one or two competitions were ignominiously beaten. Some would have Given Up. They only Came Down : then they went at their work with a will ; and never were beaten more.

The man who is most likely to Give Up, is the man who foolishly refuses to Come Down. Every human being (excepting men like Shakspeare) must do either the one thing or the other at many points in his life : and the latter is the safer thing, and will save from the former. It is the milder form of that suffering which follows disappointment and mortification. It is to the other as cow-pox to small-pox : by submitting to pass through many Comings Down, you will escape the sad misery of many Givings Up. Yet even vaccination, when it takes full effect, though much less serious than small-pox, is a painful and disagreeable thing : and in like manner, Coming Down in any way, socially, intellectually, physically, morally, is an infliction so painful, that men have devised various arts by which to escape Coming Down at all. The great way to

escape intellectual Coming Down, is to hold that men will not do you justice; that the reviewers have conspired against you; that the anonymous assassins of the press stab you out of malignity and envy; that you are an unappreciated genius; and that if your powers were only known, you would be universally recognised as a very great man. When you preach, the people fall asleep; but *that* is because the people are stupid, not because your sermons are dull. When you send an article to a magazine, it is rejected: *that* is not because the article is bad, but because the Editor is a fool. You write a book, and nobody reads it; it is because the book is carelessly printed, and the publisher devoid of energy. You paint a picture, and everybody laughs at it; it is because the taste of the age is low. You write a prize essay, and don't get the prize; it is because the judges had an objection to sound doctrine. And indeed there have been great men to whom their own age did injustice; and you may be one of these. It is highly probable that you are not. It is highly probable that your mark is gauged pretty fairly; no doubt it is lower than you think right; but it is best to Come Down to it. It is but a foolish world, and it will not last long; and there are things more excellent than even to be a very clever man, and to be recognised as such. It is curious how men soothe themselves, and avoid Coming Down, or mitigate

the pain of doing so, by secretly cherishing the belief that in some one little respect they are different from, and higher than, all the rest of their kind. And it is wonderful how such a reflection has power to break one's fall, so to speak. You don't much mind being only a commonplace man in all other respects, if only there be one respect in which you can fondly believe you are superior to everybody else. A very little thing will suffice. A man is taller than anybody else in the town or parish ; he has longer hair ; he can walk faster ; he is the first person who ever crossed the new bridge ; when the Queen passed near she bowed to him individually ; he was the earliest in the neighbourhood who got the perforated postage stamps ; he has the swiftest horse in the district ; he has the largest cabbages ; he has the oldest watch : one Smith spells his name as no other Smith was ever known to do. It is quite wonderful how far it is possible for men to find reason for cherishing in their heart a deep-seated belief, that in something or other they stand on a higher platform than all the remainder of mankind. Few men live, who do not imagine that in some respect they stand alone in the world, or stand first. I have seen people quite proud of the unexampled disease under which they were suffering. It was none of the common maladies that the people round about suffered from. I have known a country woman boast, with undisguised

elation, that the doctor had more difficulty in pulling out her tooth, than he ever before had in the case of mortal man. There is not a little country parish in Britain, but its population are persuaded that in several respects and for several reasons, it is quite the most important in the empire.

There is an expedient not uncommonly employed by men to lessen their mortification when obliged to Come Down, which may possibly be effectual as a salve to wounded vanity, but which is in the last degree miserable and contemptible. It consists in endeavouring to bring everybody else down along with you. A man is unpopular as a preacher ; he endeavours to disseminate the notion that the clergyman of the next parish is unpopular too, and that the current reports about his church being overcrowded, are gross exaggerations. A man has a very small practice as a physician ; he assures an enquiring stranger that Dr. Mimpson, who (every body says) makes fourteen thousand a year, does not really make fourteen hundred. A man's horses are always lame ; he tells you malignantly that he knows privately, that the fine pair which Smith drives in his drag, are very groggy, and require to be shod with leather. Now I do not mean to assert that there is any essential malignity in a man's feeling comfort, when obliged to Come Down himself, in the reflection that other men have had to Come Down too ; and that after Coming Down he stands still on



the same level with multitudes more. It is a natural thing to find a certain degree of consolation in such reflections. Notwithstanding what Milton says to the contrary, there is no doubt at all that 'fellowship in pain' does 'divide smart.' If you were the only bald man in the world, or the only lame man, or the only man who had lost several teeth, you would find it much harder to resign your mind to your condition; in brief, to Come Down to it. There is real and substantial mitigation of all human ills and mortifications in the sight of others as badly off. To fall on the ice along with twenty more is no great matter, unless indeed the physical suffering be great. To be guillotined as one of fifty is not nearly so bad as to go all alone. To be beaten in a competition along with half a dozen very clever fellows mitigates your mortification. The poor fellow, plucked for his degree, is a little cheered up when he goes out for a walk with three other men who have been plucked along with him. Napoleon, standing before a picture in which Alexander the Great was a figure, evinced a pleasing touch of nature when he said repeatedly, 'Alexander was smaller than me: much smaller.' The thing which I condemn is not that the man who has Come Down should look around with pleasure on his brethren in misfortune, but that the man who has Come Down should seek to pull down to his own level those whom in his secret soul he knows stand on a higher. What

I condemn is envious and malignant detraction, with its train of wilful misrepresentation, sly inuendos, depreciating shrugs and nods. I hate to hear a man speaking in terms of faint praise of another who has outstripped him in their common profession, saying that he is 'rather a clever lad,' that he 'really has some talent,' that he is 'not wholly devoid of power,' that he 'has done better than could be expected,' and the like. Very contemptible is a method of depreciation which I have often witnessed. It consists in asserting that Mr. A., whom everybody knows for a very ordinary man, is far superior to Mr. B., whom you are commending as a man of superior parts. I remember a certain public meeting. Dr. C. made a most brilliant and stirring speech; Dr. D. followed in a very dull one; Mr. E. next made a decent one. After the meeting was over, the envious E. thought to Take Down C., and cover his own Coming Down, by walking up to D., and in a very marked manner, in the presence of C., congratulating D. on having made the speech of the evening. Oh, that we could all learn to acknowledge with frankness and heartiness the merit that overtops us! Don't let us try to pull it down. Read with pleasure the essay which you feel is far better than you could have written; listen with improvement to the sermon which you feel is far better than you could have preached. I think envy is a distant feeling. In a true heart it cannot live, when you

have come to know the envied man well. It is in our nature to like the man that surpassed us when we come to know him. Perhaps it is impossible to look at merit or success in our own peculiar line without making an involuntary comparison between these and our own. Perhaps it is natural to fancy that our great doings have hardly, as yet, met the appreciation they deserve. But I do not believe that it is natural, except in men of very bad natures, to cherish any other feeling than a kindly one towards the man whose powers are so superior to ours, that with hardly an apparent effort he beats us, far as Eclipse beat his compeers, in the especial walk of our own tastes and talents, when we have done our most laborious and our best.

It is oftentimes a real kindness to assure a man, though not quite truly, that he is not Coming Down. It may tend to keep him from Giving Up. Very transparent deceptions sometimes suffice to deceive us. You remember how Dr. Johnson, when he was breaking up in the last weeks of his long life, felt very indignant at any one who told him that in health and strength he was Coming Down. Once, when the good man was tottering on the verge of the grave, a new acquaintance said to him, 'Ah, Doctor, I see the glow of health returning to your cheek:' whereupon Johnson grasped his hand warmly, and said, 'God bless you: you are the kindest friend I ever

had !' If you, benevolent reader, wish to do a kindness, and to elicit a grateful feeling, go and tell a man who is growing bald that his hair is getting thicker : tell a man of seventy that he is every day looking younger : tell a man who can now walk but at a slow pace that he walks uncommonly fast : tell a middle-aged lady whose voice is cracking, that it is always growing finer : tell a cottager who is proud of his garden, about the middle of October, that his garden is looking more blooming than in June : tell the poor artisan, the skilled workman who has been driven by want of work to take to breaking stones for the road (which in the Scotch minds holds the place which sweeping a crossing holds in the English) that you are pleased to see he has got nice light work for these winter days ; and if you be the parish clergyman, stop for a few minutes and talk cheerfully to him ; if you passed that poor down-hearted fellow to-day with only a slight recognition, he would certainly fancy (with the ingenious self-torment of fallen fortunes) that you did it because he has been obliged so sadly to Come Down. But if you want to prove yourself devoid of the instinctive benevolence of the gentleman, you will walk up to the man with a look of mingled grief and astonishment, and say, 'Oh, John, I am sorry to see you have come to this !' I have seen the like done. I have known people who, not from malignity but from pure stolidity and coarseness of nature, would insist on

impressing on the man's mind how far he had Come Down. Gelimer at Rome (or Constantinople, I forget which) did not feel his fall more than the decent Scotch carpenter or mason busy at his heap of stones by the roadside. And who, that had either heart or head, but would rather try to keep him up, than to take him farther down? It is the delicate discernment of these things that marks the gentleman and the gentlewoman. Such instinctively shrink from saying or doing a thing that will pain the feelings of another: if they say or do anything of the kind, it is not because they don't know what they are about. While vulgar people go through life, unintentionally and ignorantly sticking pins into more sensitive natures at every turn. You, my friend, accidentally meet an old school-companion. You think him a low-looking fellow as could well be seen. But you say to him kindly that you are happy to see him looking so well. He replies to you, with a confounded candour, 'I cannot say *that* of you; you are looking very old and careworn.' The boor did not mean to say anything disagreeable. It was pure want of discernment. It was simply that he is not a gentleman, and never can now be made one. 'Your daughter, poor thing; is getting hardly any partners,' said a vulgar rich woman to an old lady in a ball-room: 'it is really very bad of the young men.' The vulgar rich woman fancied she was making a kind and sympathetic remark. It is to be recorded

that sometimes such remarks have their origin not in ignorance, but in intentional malignity. Mr. Snarling, of this neighbourhood, deals in such. He sees a man looking cheerful after dinner, and laughing heartily. Mr. Snarling exclaims, ‘ Bless me, how flushed you are getting ! Did any of your relations die of apoplexy ? ’ If you should cough in the unhappy wretch’s presence, he will ask, with an anxious look, if there is consumption in your family. And he will receive your negative answer with an ominous shake of his head. ‘ I am sorry to hear,’ says Mr. Snarling, the week after your new horse comes home, ‘ I am sorry to hear about that animal proving such a bad bargain. I was sure the dealer would cheat you.’ ‘ It was very sad indeed,’ says Mr. Snarling, ‘ that you could not get that parish which you wanted.’ He shakes his head, and kindly adds, ‘ Especially as you were so very anxious to get it.’ ‘ I read the December number of *Fraser*’ (in which you have an article), says the fellow, ‘ and of all the contemptible rubbish that ever was printed, *that* was decidedly the worst.’ You cannot refrain from the retort, ‘ Yes, it was very stupid of the Editor to refuse that article you sent him : it would have raised the character of the magazine.’ Snarling’s face grows blue : he was not aware that you knew so much. Never mind poor Snarling : he punishes himself very severely. Only a man who is very unhappy himself will go about doing all he can to make

others unhappy. And gradually Snarling is understood, and then Snarling is shunned.

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I trust that none of my readers have in them anything of the Snarling spirit ; but I doubt not that even the best-natured of them have occasionally met with human beings who were blown up with vanity and conceit to a degree so thoroughly intolerable, that it would have been felt as an unspeakable privilege to be permitted (so to speak) to stick a skewer into the great inflated wind-bag, and to Take the individual several pegs Down. It is fit and pleasing that a man in any walk of life should magnify his office, and be pleased with his own proficiency in his duties. One likes to see that. The man will be the happier, and will go through his work the better. But the irritating thing is to find a human being who will talk of nothing whatsoever except himself, and his own doings and importance ; who plainly shows that he feels not the least interest in any other topic of discourse ; and who is ever trying to bring back the conversation to Number One. I have at this moment in my mind's eye a man, a woman, and a lad, in each of whom conceit appears to a degree which I never saw paralleled elsewhere. When you look at or listen to any one of them, the analogy to the blown-up bladder instantly suggests itself. They are very much alike in several respects. They are not ill-natured : though

very commonplace, they are not utter blockheads: their great characteristic is self-complacency so stolid that it never will see reason to *Come Down*, and so pachydermatous that it will be unaware of any gentle effort to *Take it Down*. There is a beautiful equanimity about the thorough dunce. He is so completely stupid, that he never for an instant suspects that he is stupid at all. He never feels any necessity to intellectually *Come Down*. A clever man has many fears that his powers are but small, but your entire booby knows no such fear. The clever man can appreciate, when done by another, that which he could not have done himself: and he is able to make many comparisons which *Take him Down*. But there are men, who could read a sermon of their own, and then a sermon by the Bishop of Oxford, and see no great difference between the two.

And now, kindly reader, we have arrived at the end of the six long slips of paper, and this Essay approaches its close. Let me say, before laying down the pen, that it is for commonplace people I write, when I advise those who look at these pages to *Come Down* intellectually to the mark fixed for them by their fellow-creatures—to believe that they are estimated pretty fairly, and appreciated much as they deserve. You and I, my friend, may possibly have fancied, once upon a time, that we were great and remarkable men; but many *Takings Down* have taught us to think soberly, and we know better now.



We shall never do anything very extraordinary: our biography will not be written after we are gone. So be it. *Fiat Voluntas Tua!* We are quite content to Come Down genially. It does not matter much that we never shall startle the world with the echoes of our fame. Let us rank ourselves with 'Nature's unambitious underwood, and flowers that prosper in the shade.' But of course there are great geniuses who ought not thus to Come Down—men who, though lightly esteemed by those around them, will some day take their place, by the consent of all enlightened judges, among the most illustrious of human kind. The very powers which are yet to make you famous, may tend to make the ignorant folk around you regard you as a crackbrained fool. You remember the beautiful fairy tale of the Ugly Duckling. The poor little thing was laughed at, pecked, and persecuted, because it was so different from the remainder of the brood, till it fled away in despair. But it was unappreciated, just because it was too good; for it grew up at length, and *then* met universal admiration: the ugly duckling was a beautiful swan! Even so that great man John Foster, preaching among a petty dissenting sect fifty years since, was set down as 'a perfect fool.' But intelligent men have fixed *his* mark now. It was because he was a swan that the quacking tribe thought him such an ugly duck. *You* may be such another. The chance is indeed ten thousand to one that you

are not. Still if you have the fixed consciousness of the divine gift within you, do not be false to your nature. Resolutely refuse to Come Down—only be assured, my friend, that should such be your resolution, you will have to resist many temptations to Give Up!

## CHAPTER IV.

CONCERNING THE WORRIES OF LIFE, AND HOW  
TO MEET THEM.

**H**ERE are the long slips of paper again, covered with thoughts upon the subject you see. For many days that subject has been simmering in the writer's mind; and now he wishes to present to the thoughtful reader certain suggestions, which both reader and writer may perhaps be the better for remembering and acting on. The pages which follow are to be regarded as of the nature of a moral medicine, which I trust may prove at once alterative, anodyne, and tonic. But you are aware, my friend, that when you or any of your family get a little out of sorts, your physician is not content to tell you merely the medicine which you must take: he tells you with equal particularity the way in which you are to take it. The vial does not come home from the druggist's, bearing simply the legend that it is steel, laudanum, or ether. *That*

is all very well, but it is not sufficient. Upon careful inspection you will discover a further inscription, setting forth how many drops you are to imbibe at once, and how frequently and at what seasons of the day you are to repeat the imbibition. Suffer me to exercise a similar prerogative with regard to the medicinal gum which I offer to the wearied and worried mind. And in addition to the title of my essay, which is *Concerning the Worries of Life, and How to Meet them*, let me write what in my case is analogous to the Doctor's *For Mrs. Smith: Fifteen drops to be taken at bedtime*, in the following direction: *For Thoughtful People: To be read quietly, leisurely, and slowly, and when alone.*

For, as you know, physical medicines may be taken at such times and in such ways that they shall do no good whatsoever. And I am well aware that this essay, like all the other essays which this hand has written, may have a similar fate. It may be read by the wrong people: it may be read at the wrong time and place. By the wrong people: by people whom it will merely serve to irritate and annoy: by men whose nervous system is so rudely vigorous that they will despise alike the little worries I describe, and the little remedies I suggest for them. I am acquainted with many human beings to whom I should no more think of offering one of these essays, than I should think of walking into Mr. Smith's stable, and reading it to the horses that run

in his drag. This is said, God knows, in no supercilious spirit: It is not that 'I believe such persons either worse or better than me: only I know that they are quite *different* from me. But I am not so much afraid of my essays getting into the hands of the wrong people; for the man who feels at once that he has no sympathy at all with their writer will speedily throw them aside; and as for his opinion of them, *that* is neither here nor there. The thing I mainly dread is, that the people for whom I write should read these pages in the wrong way. An immense deal depends, in the case of quiet and not brilliant writing, which yet cost some thought, upon the surroundings amid which it is read. And the essay-writer, as he traces his successive lines, has in his mind's eye some ideal reader reading his essay in some ideal place and time. But in his calculation in these respects, the essayist is no doubt often sadly mistaken. Here is a great advantage which one has in writing a sermon, as compared with writing an essay. In writing your sermon you have your congregation before your mental view. You have before you the time and the place where it is to be preached. You see the church: you remember the pulpit: you picture to yourself the faces and aspect of the congregation: you instinctively recognise the hour of the day at which you will give out your text, and begin your discourse: you maintain intuitively and involuntarily a certain keeping between what you

write, and all these attendant circumstances. But the essayist writes for people he has never seen ; who will read his essay in chambers unknown to him ; in comfortable easy chairs by warm fires : on stiff chairs with no arms in cold corners : in lonely lodgings : amid a great shouting of little children : with the accompaniment of a stupid old woman talking on in a husky voice : with their hard hats on their heads in the reading-rooms of Royal-Exchanges, Athenæums, and Philosophical Institutions : in a great hurry, and standing : quite leisurely, and reclining : beside a window that looks out on evergreens and roses : beside a window, seldom cleaned, that commands a slushy street, depressing with its brown, half-melted snow. How can you adapt yourself to all these different people and their different circumstances ? The material which suits one will not suit the rest. The essay suited to be read after dinner will not do for reading after breakfast. That which is intended for a man, resting and pensive, when the day's work is over, would be most incompatible with the few minutes, for which the busy, energetic man takes up the magazine at 9.50 A.M., while waiting for the conveyance which is to come at 10, and convey him to his office or his chambers. And so it is that at the present time, I desire not only to provide the written pages, but to explain where and when they are to be read : not only to provide the medicine, but to say how it is to be made

use of. Let it, then, be understood that this essay is to be read in the evening, in the leisurely hour of a thoughtful person, after the day's toil is over, and when there is nothing more to look forward to in the way of work. Sit down, my friend, in an easy chair by the fireside: feel that you have plenty of time; then let these pages be read in quiet.

Let me explain why I say so much of the external circumstances which I hold to be absolutely essential to the proper reading of this essay, and of many which have gone before it. One day in the month of January of this year, I went to a certain large institution in a certain great city, where newspapers and periodicals are provided for the amusement and instruction of many hundreds of readers. I think I see it yet, the great, lofty, vaulted chamber, where scores of newspapers were extended on frames, and scores more lay on tables; while many readers roved from printed sheet to printed sheet, like the bee from flower to flower; and many more, silent and intent, were going eagerly at the paper which they held most dear. I see it yet, the magazine-room, where there lay on certain tables copies of every monthly and quarterly published in Britain, a vast array. And there, not, as in my humble dwelling, a cherished and solitary guest, but only a unit in a multitude, it lay, 'sad-coloured externally, but radiant within with intellectual and moral brightness, the MAGAZINE OF FRASER, SUITABLE ALIKE FOR COUNTRY AND FOR

TOWN. Advancing as towards a friend, I seized the periodical, and carelessly turned over its leaves amid that hum of men, and that slamming of opening and shutting doors. At length my eye rested on a certain article. It is unnecessary to specify what the article was about; let it suffice to say that its title began with *Concerning*; that modest word to which no reviewer has hitherto done justice, which hints that though the essay may say various things about a subject, it does not pretend to exhaust the subject, but leaves a vast deal more to say. With much satisfaction I perceived that the pages which bore that article were remarkably dirty. Indeed, I do not think I ever saw dirtier pages; and by a subtle process of ratiocination, I arrived at the conviction that those dirty pages must have been pressed by many hands, while the lines they bore were read by many eyes. My first emotion was one of exultation. I am a popular author, thought I to myself! And considering that hardly any of my neighbours know that I ever wrote for the press, and that my nearest relations seldom take the trouble of perusing my articles, the extreme novelty of the reflection produced a pardonable elation. But other thoughts followed. I felt the influence of the scene. A subdued buzz filled the air: people were constantly coming in and going out, and moving from place to place: every one had his hat on, and of course every one's head was uncomfortable. There were no easy



chairs on which to lean back and read : people were sitting on forms, leaning forward on tables, and reading in that posture. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock A.M.; and one felt that the day's task of work was yet to do. And when, under all these impressions, I turned over the leaves, I declare I did not recognise my own article. It seemed thoroughly out of keeping with everything there. I could not understand it, or follow it, or sympathise with it, in that feverish, hurried atmosphere. It was a faintly-flavoured thing, that had no chance by the side of short, thrilling, exciting tales, in this and that clever periodical. How the pages ever got dirty, I cannot imagine ; for I know I could not have read them there myself. Do not, friendly reader, try to peruse my essays in such a place. They cannot stand it. Laudanum, suitably applied, is an efficient medicine ; but it would produce no effect if rubbed on the palm of the hand. And the writer's essays, which he gladly believes have served some good and kindly ends to many sympathetic though unknown friends, will never serve these ends unless they are read in the fashion on which I have already insisted. Therefore would I (so to speak) label this article or dissertation not simply with its title, but with that further direction which is given on a preceding page. Let me carry my idea to a greater length. I said that most bottles of medicine bear not only the name of their contents, but direc-

tions for the use of their contents. This is not so, however, with all. Sometimes, when the medicine has been taken for a long time, it bears only to be *The Mixture as formerly*. The patient, it is understood, knows so well how to take it, and when, that it is needless to repeat the direction for its use. Let me please myself with the belief that many valued friends, when they discern an essay with the old initials, will know, without telling anew, how it ought to be read. It is *The Mixture as before*. Let it be taken in the old way. And kindly try to put up with a fashion, both in thought and word, which you may truly believe is not intended to be either egotistical or affected.

But now to my proper task. I have certain suggestions to offer *Concerning the Worries of Life, and How to Meet them*. I am quite aware that the reader of a metaphysical turn, after he has read my essay, may be disposed to find fault with its title. The plan which is to be advocated for the treatment of the *Worries of Life*, can only in a modified sense be described as *Meeting them*. You cannot be said to face a thing on which you turn your back. \* You cannot accurately be described as meeting a man whom you walk away from. You do not, in strictness, regard a thing in any mode or fashion, which you do not regard at all. But, after intense reflection, I could devise no title that set out my subject

so well as the present : and so here it is. Perfection is not generally attainable in human doings. It is enough, if things are so, that they *will do*. No doubt this is no excuse for not making them as good as one can. But the fact is, as you get older, you seldom have time to write down any plausible excuse, before you see a crushing answer to it. The man who has thought longest comes back to the point at which the man stands who has hardly thought at all. He feels, more deeply year by year, the truth of the grand axiom, that *Much may be said on Both Sides*.

Now, my reader, you shall have, in a very brief space, the essence of my Theory as to the Treatment of Human Worry.

Let us picture to ourselves a man, living in a pleasant home, in the midst of a beautiful country. Pleasing scenes are all around him, wherever he can look. There are evergreens and grass : fields and hedgerows : hills and streams : in the distance the sea ; and somewhat nearer, the smoke of a little country town. Now, what would you think of this man, if he utterly refused to look at the cheerful and beautiful prospects which everywhere invite his eye ; and spent the whole day gazing intently at the dunghill, and hanging over the pigsty ? And all this though his taste were not so peculiar as to lead him to take any pleasure in the contemplation of the pigsty or the dunghill ; all this, though he had a

more than ordinary dislike to contemplate pigsties or dunghills? No doubt, you would say the man is a monomaniac.

And yet, my reader, don't you know (possibly from your own experience) that in the moral world many men and women do a thing precisely analogous, without ever being suspected of insanity? Don't you know that multitudes of human beings turn away from the many blessings of their lot, and dwell and brood upon its worries? Don't you know that multitudes persistently look away from the numerous pleasant things they might contemplate, and look fixedly and almost constantly at painful and disagreeable things? You sit down, my friend, in your snug library, beside the evening fire. The blast without is hardly heard through the drawn curtains. Your wife is there, and your two grown-up daughters. You feel thankful that after the bustle of the day, you have this quiet retreat where you may rest, and refit yourself for another day with its bustle. But the conversation goes on. Nothing is talked of but the failings of the servants and the idleness and impudence of your boys; unless indeed it be the supercilious bow with which Mrs. Snooks that afternoon passed your wife, and the fact that the pleasant dinner-party at which you assisted the evening before at Mr. Smith's has been ascertained to have been one of a second-chop character, his more honoured guests having dined

on the previous day. Every petty disagreeable in your lot, in short, is brought out, turned ingeniously in every possible light, and aggravated and exaggerated to the highest degree. The natural and necessary result follows. An hour, or less, of this discipline brings all parties to a sulky and snappish frame of mind. And instead of the cheerful and thankful mood in which you were disposed to be when you sat down, you find that your whole moral nature is jarred and out of gear. And your wife, your daughters, and yourself, pass into moody, sullen silence, over your books—books which you are not likely for this evening to much appreciate or enjoy. Now, I put it to every sensible reader, whether there be not a great deal too much of this kind of thing. Are there not families that never spend a quiet evening together, without embittering it by raking up every unpleasant subject in their lot and history? There are folk who, both in their own case and that of others, seem to find a strange satisfaction in sticking the thorn in the hand farther in: even in twisting the dagger in the heart. Their lot has its innumerable blessings, but they will not look at these. Let the view around in a hundred directions be ever so charming, they cannot be got to turn their mental view in one of these. They persist in keeping nose and eyes at the moral pigsty.

Oh, what a blessing it would be if we human beings could turn away our mind's eye at will, as we

can our physical ! As we can turn away from an ugly view in the material world, and look at a pleasing one ; if we could but do the like in the world of mind ! As you turn your back on a dunghill, or a foul stagnant ditch : if you could so turn your back on your servants' errors, on your children's faults, on the times when you made a fool of yourself, on the occasions when sad disappointment came your way—in short, upon those prospects which are painful to look back upon ! You go to bed, I may assume, every evening. How often, my friend, have you tossed about there, hour after hour, sleepless and fevered, stung by care, sorrow, worry : as your memory persisted in bringing up again a thousand circumstances which you could wish for ever forgot : as each sad hour and sad fact came up and stuck its little sting into your heart ! I do not suppose that you have led a specially wicked life ; I do not write for blackguards ; I suppose your life has been innocent on the whole, and your lot prosperous :—I assume no more than the average of petty vexations, mortification, and worries. You remember how that noble man, Sir Charles Napier, tells us in his *Diary*, that sometimes, when irritated by having discovered some more than usually infamous job or neglect, or stung by a keener than ordinary sense of the rascally injustice which pursued him through life, he tossed about all night in a half-frantic state, shouting, praying, and blaspheming. Now, whether

you be a great man or a little man, when you lay your head on your thorny' pillow, have you not longed oftentimes for the power of resolutely turning the mind's eye in another direction than that which it was so miserable a thing for you to contemplate? We all know, of course, how some, when the mind grew into that persistent habit of looking in only one direction, of harbouring only one wretched thought, which is of the essence of madness, have thought, as they could not turn away the mind's eye at will, to blindfold the mind (so to speak) altogether: to make sure that it should see nothing at all. By opium, by strong drink, men have endeavoured to reduce the mind to pure stupefaction, as their sole chance of peace. And you know too, kindly reader, that even such means have sometimes failed of their sorrowful purpose; and that men have madly flung off the burden of this life, as though thus they could fling off the burden of self and of remembrance.

I have said that it would be an unspeakable blessing if we could as easily turn the eyes away from a moral as from a physical pigsty; and in my belief we may, to a great degree, train ourselves to such a habit. You see, from what I have just said, that I do not think the thing is always or entirely to be done. The only way to forget a thing is to cease to feel any interest in it; and we cannot cheat ourselves into the belief that we feel no interest in a

thing which we intensely desire to forget. But though the painful thing do not, at our will, quite die away into nothing, still we may habituate ourselves to look away from it. Only time can make our vexations and worries fade into nothing though we are looking at them: even as only distance in space can make the pigsty disappear, if we retire from it still looking in its direction. But we may turn our back on the pigsty, and so cease to behold it though it be close at hand. And in like manner we may get our mind so under control, that in ordinary cases it will answer the rein. We may acquire, by long-continued effort, the power to turn our back upon the worry—that is, in unmetaphoric language, to think of something else.

I have often occasion to converse with poor people about their little worries, their cares and trials; and from the ingenious way in which they put them, so as to make them look their very worst, it is sometimes easy to see that the poor man or woman has been brooding for long hours over the painful thing, turning it in all different ways, till the thing has been got into that precise point of view in which it looks its very ugliest. It is like one of those gutta-percha heads, squeezed into its most hideous grin. And I have thought, how long this poor soul must have persisted in looking at nothing but this dreary prospect before finding out so accurately the spot whence it looks most dreary. I might mention one



or two amusing instances ; but I do not think it would be fair to give the facts, and I could not invent any parallel cases unless by being myself painfully worried. And we all know that, apart from other reasons, it is impolitic to look too long at a disagreeable object, for this reason—that all subjects, pleasing or painful, greatness on our view if we look at them long. They grow much bigger. You can hardly write a sermon (writing it as carefully and well as you can) without being persuaded before you have done with it, that the doctrine or duty you are seeking to enforce is one of the very highest possible importance. You feel this incomparably more strongly when you have finished your discourse than you did when you began it. So with an essay or an article. Half in jest, you chose your subject ; half earnestly, you sketched out your plan ; but as you carefully write it out, it begins to grow upon you that it would be well for the human race would it but listen to your advice and act upon it. It is so also with our worries, so with all the ills of our lot, so especially with any treachery or injustice with which we may have been treated. You may brood over a little worry till, like the prophet's cloud, it passes from being of the size of a man's hand into something that blackens all the sky, from the horizon to the zenith. You may dwell upon the cruelty and treachery with which you have been used, till the thought of them stings

you almost to madness. Who but must feel for the abandoned wife, treated unquestionably with scandalous barbarity, who broods over her wrongs till she can think of nothing else, and can hardly speak or write without attacking her unworthy husband? You may, in a moral sense, look at the pigsty or the open sewer till, wherever you look, you shall see nothing save open sewers and pigsties. You may dwell so long on your own care and sorrow, that you shall see only care and sorrow everywhere. Now, don't give in to that if you can help it.

Some one has used you ill—cheated you, misrepresented you. An ugly old woman, partially deaf, and with a remarkably husky voice, has come to your house without an invitation, and notwithstanding the most frigid reception which civility will permit, persists in staying for ten days. You overhear Mr. Snarling informing a stranger that your essays are mainly characterised by conceit and ill-nature. Your wife and you enter a drawing-room to make a forenoon visit. Miss Limejuice is staying at the house. Your friend, Mr. Smith, drove you down in his drag, which is a remarkably handsome turn-out. And entering the drawing-room somewhat faster than was expected, you surprise Miss Limejuice, still with a malignant grin on her extraordinarily ugly countenance, telegraphing across the room to the lady of the house to come and look at the carriage. In an instant the malignant

grin is exchanged for a fawning smile, but not so quickly but that you saw the malignant grin. A man has gone to law with you about a point which appears to you perfectly clear. Now, don't sit down and think over and over again these petty provocations. Exclude them from your mind. Most of them are really too contemptible to be thought of. The noble machinery of your mind, though you be only a commonplace good-hearted mortal, was made for something better than to grind that wretched grist. And as for greater injuries, don't think of them more than you can help. You will make yourself miserable. You will think the man who cheated or misrepresented you an incarnate demon, while probably he is in the main not so bad, though possessed of an unhappy disposition to tell lies to the prejudice of his acquaintance. Remember that if you could see his conduct, and your own conduct, from his point of view, you might see that there is much to be said even for him. No matter how wrong a man is, he may be able to persuade himself into the honest belief that he is in the right. You may kill an apostle, and think you are doing God service. You may vilify a curate, who is more popular than yourself; and in the process of vilification, you may quote much Scripture and shed many tears. Very, very few offenders see their offence in the precise light in which you do while you condemn it. So resolve

that in any complicated case, in which misapprehension is possible ; in all cases in which you cannot convict a man of direct falsehood ; you shall give him credit for honesty of intention. And as to all these petty offences which have been named—as to most petty mortifications and disappointments—why, turn your back on them. Turn away from the contemplation of Mr. Snarling's criticism as you would turn away from a little stagnant puddle to look at fairer sights. Look in the opposite direction from all Miss Limejuice's doings and sayings, as you would look in the opposite direction from the sole untidy corner of the garden, where the rotten pea-sticks are. As for the graver sorrow, try and think of it no more. Learn its lesson indeed ; God sent it to teach you something and to train you somehow ; but then try and think of it no more.

But there are mortals who are always raking up unpleasant subjects, because they have a real delight in them. Like the morbid anatomist, they would rather look at a diseased body than a healthy one. Well, in the case of their own lot,\* let such be indulged. At first, when you find them every time you see them, beginning again the tedious story of all their discomforts and worries, you are disposed to pity them, tedious and uninteresting though the story of their slights and grievances be. Do not throw away pity upon such. They are not suitable

objects of charity. They have a real though perverted enjoyment in going over that weary narration. It makes them happy to tell at length how miserable they are. They would rather look at the pigsty than not. Let them. It is all quite right. But unhappily such people, not content themselves to contemplate pigsties, generally are anxious to get their acquaintances to contemplate *their* pigsties too ; and as their acquaintances, in most instances, would rather look at a clover-field than a pigsty, such people become companions of the most disagreeable sort. As you are sitting on a fine summer evening on the grass before your door, tranquil, content, full of thankful enjoyment, they are fond (so to speak) of suddenly bringing in a scavenger's cart, and placing it before you, where it will blot out all the pleasant prospect. They will not let you forget the silly thing you said or did, the painful passage in your life on which you wish to shut down the leaf for ever. They are always probing the half-healed wound, sticking the knife into the sensitive place. If the view in a hundred directions is beautiful, they will, by instant affinity and necessity of nature, beg you to look at the dunghill, and place the dunghill before you for that purpose. I believe there are many able, sensitive men, who never had a fair chance in life. Their powers have been crippled, their views embittered, their whole nature soured, by a constant discipline of petty whips and

scourges, and little pricking needles, applied (in some cases through pure stolidity and coarseness of nature) by an ill-mated wife. It is only by flying from their own fireside that they can escape the unceasing gadfly, with its petty, irritating, never-ending sting. They live in an atmosphere of pigsty. They cannot lift their eyes but some ugly, petty, contemptible wrong is sure to be crammed upon their aching gaze. And it must be a very sweet and noble nature that years of this training will not embitter. It must be a very great mind that years of this training will fail to render inconceivably petty and little. Oh! woful and miserable to meet a man of fifty or sixty, an educated man, who in this world of great interests and solemn anticipations, can find no subjects to talk of but the neglect of his wealthy neighbour, the extortionate price he is charged for sugar, the carelessness of his manservant, the flirtations of his maid-servants, the stiffness of Lord Dunderhead when he lately met that empty-pated peer. In what a petty world such a man lives! Under what a low sky he walks: how muggy the atmosphere he breathes!

You remember Mr. Croaker, in Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man*. Whenever he saw a number of people cheerful and happy, he always contrived to throw a chill and damp over the circle by wishing, with a ghastly air, that they might all be as well that day six months. I have known many Croakers.

I have known men who, if they saw a young fellow quite happy in his lot and 'his work, hopeful and hearty,' would instantly try to suggest something that might make him unhappy ; that might pull him down to a congenial gloom. I have known persons who, if they had looked upon a gay circle of sweet, lively girls, rosy and smiling, would have enjoyed extremely to have (in a moral sense) suddenly brought into that fair circle a hearse and a coffin. And I have been filled with fiery indignation, when I knew that such persons, really acting from malignant spite and bitterness to see others happy, would probably have claimed to be acting from religious motives, and doing a Christian duty. The very foundation, and primary axiom, in some men's religious belief, is, that Almighty God is spitefully angry to see His creatures happy. Oh what a wicked, mischievous lie ! God is love. And we know it on the highest of all authorities, that the very first and grandest duty He claims of His creatures, is to love Him with heart and soul and strength and mind ; not to shrink before Him like whipped slaves before a capricious, sulky tyrant ; but to love Him and trust to Him as loving children might gather at the kindest parent's knee. I am content to look at a pigsty when needful : God intends that we should oftentimes look at such in the moral world ; but God intends that we should look at clover-fields and fragrant flowers whenever we can do so without a

dereliction of duty. I am quite sure that when the Blessed Redeemer went to the marriage at Cana of Galilee, he did not think it his duty to cast a gloom and a damp over the festive company there. Do not misunderstand me, my spiteful acquaintance. There is a time to mourn as well as a time to dance; and in this life we shall have quite enough of the former time, without seeking for supererogatory woes. I am not afraid, myself, to look upon the recent grave; I would train my children to sit upon the daisied mound, pensive, but not afraid, as I told them that Christianity has turned the *sepulchrum* into the *κοιμητήριον*—the *burying-place* into the *sleeping-place*; as I told them how the Christian dead do but sleep for the Great Awakening. But I should not think it right to break in upon their innocent cheer by rushing in and telling them that their coffin would soon be coming, and that their grave was waiting in the churchyard. There are times enough and events enough which will tell them that. Don't let us have Mr. Croaker. And don't let us fancy that by making ourselves miserable, we are doing something pleasing to God. It is not His purpose that we should look at pigsties when we can honestly help it. No doubt, the erroneous belief that God wishes that we should, runs through all religions. India, Persia, Arabia, have known it, no less than Rome, England, Scotland; the fakir, the eremite, the monk, the Covenanter,



have erred together here. The Church of England, and the Church of Scotland, are no more free from the tendency to it, than the Church of Rome; and the grim Puritan, who thought it sinful to smile, was just as far wrong as the starved monastic and the fleshless Brahmin. Every now and then, I preach a sermon against this notion; not that people now-a-days will actually scourge and starve themselves; but that they carry with them an inveterate belief that it would be a fine thing if they did. Here is the conclusion of the last sermon: various friendly readers have sent me fancy specimens of bits of my discourses; let them compare their notion of them with the fact:—

It shows how all men, everywhere, have been pressed by a common sense of guilt against God, which they thought to expiate by self-inflicted punishment. But we, my friends, know better than *that*. Jesus died for us; Jesus suffered for us; His sufferings took away our sins; our own sufferings, how great soever, never could; Christ's sacrifice was all-sufficient; and any penance on our part is just as needless as it would be unavailing. Take then, brethren, without a scruple or a misgiving, the innocent enjoyment of life. Let your heart beat, gladly and thankfully, by your quiet fireside; and never dream that there is anything of sinful self-indulgence in that pure delight with which you watch your children's sports and hear their prattle. Look out upon green spring fields and blossoms, upon summer woods and streams; gladden in the bright sunshine, as well as muse in the softening twilight; and never fancy that though these things cheer you amid the many cares of life, you are therefore falling short of the ideal sketched by that kindly Teacher of self-denial who said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily!'

Having relieved my feelings by thus stating my resolute protest against what I think one of the most mischievous and wicked errors I ever knew, I proceed to say that although I think nothing can be more foolish than to be always looking at moral pigsties, still the principle cannot be laid down without some restriction. You may, by indulging the disposition to look away from unpleasant prospects, bring your mind to a morbid state : you may become so oversensitive, that you shall shrink away from the very thought of injustice, cruelty, or suffering. I do not suppose selfishness. I am not talking to selfish, heartless persons, who can look on with entire composure at suffering of any sort, provided it do not touch themselves. I am quite content that such should endure all that may befall them, and more. The heart of some men is like an extremely tough beef-steak, which needs an immense deal of beating before it will grow tender. The analogy does not hold entirely ; for I believe the very toughest steak may be beaten till it grows tender ; or at least the beating will not make it tougher. Whereas the human heart is such, that while in generous natures it learns, by suffering, to feel for the suffering of others, in selfish and sordid natures it becomes only the more selfish and self-contained the more it is called to feel. But I am not speaking to selfish persons. I am thinking of generous, sensitive human beings, to whom the contemplation of injustice and cruelty

and falsehood is as painful when these are pressing upon others, as when they are pressing upon themselves. \* I am thinking of men and women who feel their hearts quicken and their cheeks flush when they read the stupid and unjust verdicts of occasional (must I say frequent?) juries : and the preposterous decisions of London police magistrates now and then. To such, I well believe, the daily reading of the law report in the *Times* is a painful worry : it sets before one so sad a picture of human sin and folly ; and it shows so strongly that human laws labour most vainly to redress the greater part of the evils that press on human life. You remember how once Byron, at Venice, durst not open the *Quarterly Review* ; and sent it away after it had been several days in his house, ignorant even whether it contained any notice of him. Of course this was a purely selfish shrinking ; the poet knew that his nature would so wince under the dreaded attack, that he was afraid even to ascertain whether there were any attack at all. Have not you, my reader, from a morbid though more generous sensitiveness, sometimes shrunk from opening the newspaper which day by day reported some iniquitous court-martial, some scandalous trial in the Ecclesiastical Court, revealing human depravity in its foulest manifestation, and setting out and pressing upon your view evils which were practically remediless ? And so, thinking of such things, I wish to qualify my great principle, that in the

moral world it is wise and right to turn your back upon the pigsty, where practicable. I have thought of two limitations of this principle. The first limitation is this : that however painful it may be to look at unpleasant things, we ought fairly to face them so long as there is any hope of remedying them. The second limitation is this : that however painful it may be to look at unpleasant things, we ought not to train ourselves, by constantly refusing to look at them, to a morbidly shrinking habit of mind. Such a habit, by indulgence, will grow upon us to that degree, that it will unfit us for the rude wear of life. And the moral nature, grown sensitive as the mimosa, will serve as a conductor to convey many a wretched and debilitating pang to the heart.

Let us think of these two limitations of my theory as to the fashion in which the worries of life should be met.

Though it is wise, generally speaking, to look away from painful sights, it is not wise or right to do so while, by facing them, we may hope to mend them. It is not good, like a certain priest and Levite of ancient times, to turn our back on the poor man lying half dead by the way-side ; while it is still possible for a Good Samaritan to pour in oil and wine. However unpleasing the sight, however painful the effort, let us look fairly at the worry in our lot, till we have done our best to put it right. It is not the act of wisdom, it is the doing of

indolence, selfishness, and cowardice, to turn our back on that which we may remedy or even alleviate by facing it. It is only when no good can come of brooding over the pigsty that I counsel the reader persistently to turn away from it. Many men try to forget some family vexation, some neglected duty, some social or political grievance, when they ought manfully to look full at it, to see it in its true dimensions and colours, and to try to mend matters. They cannot truly forget the painful fact. Even when it is not distinctly remembered, a vague, dull, unhappy sense of something amiss will go with them everywhere—all the more unhappy because conscience will tell them they are doing wrong. It is so in small matters as well as great. Your book-case is all in confusion ; the papers in your drawers have got into a sad mess. It is easier, you think, to shut the doors, to lock the drawers, to go away and think of something else, than manfully to face the pigsty and sort it up. Possibly you may do so. If you are a nerveless, cowardly being, you will ; but you will not be comfortable though you have turned your back on the pigsty : a gnawing consciousness of the pigsty's existence will go with you wherever you go. Say your affairs have become embarrassed ; you are living beyond your means ; you are afraid to add up your accounts and ascertain how you stand. Ah, my friend, many a poor man well knows the feeling ! Don't give in to it. Fairly face the fact :

know the worst. Many a starving widow and orphan, many a pinched family reduced from opulence to sordid shifts, have suffered because the dead father would not while he lived face the truth in regard to his means and affairs ! Let not that selfish being quote my essay in support of the course he takes. However complicated and miserable the state of the facts may be—though the pigsty should be like the Augean stable—look fairly at it : see it in its length and breadth ; cut off your dinner-parties, sell your horses, kick out the fellows who make a hotel of your house and an ordinary of your table ; bring your establishment to what your means can reach, to what will leave enough to insure your life. Don't let your miserable children have to think bitterly of you in your grave ! And another respect in which you ought to carry out the same resolute purpose to look the pigsty full in the face is, in regard to your religious views and belief. Don't turn your back upon your doctrinal doubts and difficulties. Go up to them and examine them. Perhaps the ghastly object which looks to you in the twilight like a sheeted ghost, may prove to be no more than a tablecloth hanging upon a hedge ; but if you were to pass it distantly without ascertaining what it is, you might carry the shuddering belief that you had seen a disembodied spirit all your days. Some people (very wrongly, as I think) would have you turn the key upon your sceptical difficulties, and

look away from the pigsty altogether. From a stupid though prevalent delusion as to the meaning of *Faith*, they have a vague impression that the less ground you have for your belief, and the more objections you stoutly refuse to see, the more faith you have got. It is a poor theory, that of some worthy divines; it amounts to just this: Christianity is true, and it is proved true by evidence; but for any sake don't examine the evidence, for the more you examine it the less likely are you to believe it. I say, No. Let us see your difficulties and objections; only to define them will cut them down to half their present vague misty dimensions. I am not afraid of them; for though, after all is said, they continue to be difficulties, I shall show you that difficulties a hundredfold greater stand in the way of the contrary belief; and it is just by weighing opposing difficulties that you can in this world come to any belief, scientific, historical, moral, political. Let me say here that I heartily despise the man who professes a vague scepticism on the strength of difficulties which he has never taken the pains fairly to measure. It is hypocritical pretence when a man professes at the same instant to turn his back upon a prospect, and to be guided by what he discerns in that prospect. But there are men who would like to combine black with white, yes with no. There are men who are always anxious to combine the contradictory

enterprises, *How to do a thing*, and *How at the same time not to do it*.

In brief, my limitation is this : Do not refuse to admit distressing thoughts, if any good is to come of admitting them ; do not turn your back on the ugly prospect, so long as there is hope of mending it ; don't be like the wrecked sailor, who drinks himself into insensibility while a hope of rescue remains ; don't refuse to worry yourself by thinking what is to become of your children after you are gone, if there be still time to devise some means of providing for them. Look fairly at the blackest view, and go at it bravely if there be the faintest chance of making it brighter.

And, in truth, a great many bad things prove to be not so bad when you fairly look at them. The day seems horribly rainy and stormy when you look out of your library window ; but you wrap up and go out resolutely for a walk, and the day is not so bad. By the time your brisk five miles are finished, you think it rather a fine breezy day, healthful though boisterous. All remediable evils are made a great deal worse by turning your back on them. The skeleton in the closet rattles its bare bones abominably when you lock the closet door. Your disorderly drawer of letters and papers was a bugbear for weeks, because you put off sorting it and tried to forget it. It made you unhappy—vaguely uneasy, as all neglected duties do ; yet you thought



the trouble of putting it right would be so great that you would rather bear the little gnawing uneasiness. At length you could stand it no more. You determined some day to go at your task and do it. You did it. It was done speedily; it was done easily. You felt a blessed sense of relief, and you wondered that you had made such a painful worry of a thing so simple. By the make of the universe every duty deferred grows in bulk and weight and painful pressure.

It may here be said that when a worry cannot be forgotten, and yet cannot be mended, it is a good thing to try to define it. Measure its exact size. That is sure to make it look smaller. I have great confidence in the power of the pen to give most people clearer ideas than they would have without it. You have a vague sense that in your lot there is a vast number of worries and annoyances. Just sit down, take a large sheet of paper and a pen, and write out a list of all your annoyances and worries. You will be surprised to find how few they are, and how small they look. And if on another sheet of paper you make a list of all the blessings you enjoy, I believe that in most cases you will see reason to feel heartily ashamed of your previous state of discontent. Even should the catalogue of worries not be a brief one, still the killing thing—the vague sense of indefinite magnitude and number—will be gone. Almost all numbers diminish by accurately

counting them. A clergyman may honestly believe that there are five hundred people in his church ; but unless he be a person accustomed accurately to estimate numbers, you will find on counting that his congregation does not exceed two hundred and fifty. When the Chartist petition was presented to Parliament some years ago, it was said to bear the signatures of five or six millions of people. It looked such an immense mass that possibly its promoters were honest in promulgating that belief. But the names were counted, and they amounted to no more than a million and a half. So, thoughtful reader, who fancy yourself torn by a howling pack of worries, count them. You will find them much fewer than you had thought ; and the only way to satisfactorily count them is by making a list of them in writing.

Yet here there is a difficulty too. The purpose for which I advise you to make such a list, is to assure yourself that your worries are really not so very many or so very great. But there is hardly any means in this world which may not be worked to the opposite of the contemplated end. And by writing out and dwelling on the list of your worries, you may make them worse. You may diminish their number, but increase their intensity. You may set out the relations and tendencies of the vexations under which you suffer, of the ill usage of which you complain, till you whip yourself up to a point of violent indignation. In reading the life of

Sir Charles Napier, I think one often sees cause to lament that the great man so chronicled and dwelt upon the petty injustices which he met with from petty men. And when a poor governess writes the story of her indignities, recording them with painful accuracy, and putting them in the most unpleasing light, one feels that it would have been better had she not taken up the pen. But indeed these are instances coming under the general principle set out some time since, that irremediable worries are for the most part better forgotten.

So much for the first limitation of my theory for the treatment of worries. The second, you remember, is, that we ought not to give in to the impulse to turn our back upon the ugly prospect to such a degree that any painful sight or thought shall be felt like a mortal stab. You may come to that point of morbid sensitiveness. And I believe that the greatest evil of an extremely retired country life is, that it tends to bring one to that painfully shrinking state. You may be afraid to read the *Times*, for the suffering caused you by the contemplation of the irremediable sin and misery of which you read the daily record there. You may come to wish that you could creep away into some quiet corner, where the uproar of human guilt and wretchedness should never be heard again. You may come to sympathise heartily with the weary aspiration of the Psalmist, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove: then would I fly away and

be at rest !' Sometimes as you stand in your stable, smoothing down your horse's neck, you may think how quiet and silent a place it is, how free from worry, and wish you had never to go out of the stall. Or when you have been for two or three days ill in bed, the days going on and going down so strangely, you may have thought that you would stay there for the remainder of your life ; that you could not muster resolution to set yourself again to the daily worry. You people who cannot understand the state of feeling which I am trying to describe, be thankful for it : but do not doubt that such a state of feeling exists in many minds.

Let me confess, for myself, that for several years past I have been afraid to read a good novel. It is intensely painful to contemplate and realise to one's mind the state of matters set out in most writings of the class. Apart from the question of not caring for that order of thought (and to me dissertation is much more interesting than narrative), don't you shrink from the sight of struggling virtue and triumphant vice, of cruelty, oppression, and successful falsehood ? Give us the story that has no exciting action ; that moves along without incident transcending the experience of ordinary human beings : that shows us quiet, simple, innocent modes of life, free from the intrusion of the stormy and wicked world around. Don't you begin, as you grow older, to sympathise with that feeling of the poet Beattie,

which when younger you laughed at, that Shakspeare's admixture of the grotesque in his serious plays was absolutely necessary to prevent the tragic part from producing an effect too painful for endurance? The poet maintained that Shakspeare was aiming to save those who might witness his plays from a 'disordered head or a broken heart.' You see there, doubtless, the working of a morbid nervous system; but there is a substratum of truth. Once upon a time, when a man was worried by the evils of his lot, he could hope to escape from them by getting into the world of fiction. But now much fiction is such that you are worse there than ever. I do not think of the grand, romantic, and tremendously melodramatic incidents which one sometimes finds; these do not greatly pain us, because we feel both characters and incidents to be so thoroughly unreal. I do not mind a bit when the hero of *Monte Cristo* is flung into the sea in a sack from a cliff some hundreds of feet high; that pains one no more than the straits and misfortunes of *Munchausen*. The wearing thing is to be carried into homely scenes, and shown life-like characters, bearing and struggling with the worries of life we know so well. We are reminded, only too vividly, of the hard strife of reduced gentility to keep up appearances, of the aging, life-wearing battle with constant care. It is as much wear of heart to look into that picture truthfully set before us by a man or woman of

genius, as to look at the sad reality of this world of struggle, privation, and failure. It was just the sight of these that we wished to escape, and lo! there they are again. So one shrinks from the sympathetic reading of a story too truthfully sad. I once read *Vanity Fair*. I would not read it again on any account, any more than one would willingly go through the delirium of a fever, or revive distinctly the circumstances of the occasion on which one acted like a fool. The story was admirable, incomparable; but it was too sadly true. We see quite enough of that sort of thing in actual life: let us not have it again when we seek relief from the realities of actual life. Once you got into a sunshiny atmosphere when you began to read a work of fiction; or if the light was lurid, it was manifestly the glare of some preparation of sulphur in a scene-shifter's hand. But now, you are often in a doleful gray, from the beginning of a story to its end.

It is a great blessing when a man's nature or training is such that he is able to turn away entirely from his work when he desists from actual working, and to shut his eyes to the contemplation of any painful thing when its contemplation ceases to be necessary or useful. There is much in this of native idiosyncrasy, but a good deal may be done by discipline. You may to a certain extent acquire the power to throw off from the mind the burden that is weighing upon it, at all times except the moment

during which the burden is actually to be borne. I envy the man who stops his work and instantly forgets it till it is time to begin again. I envy the man who can lay down his pen while writing on some subject that demands all his mental stretch, and go out for a walk, and yet not through all his walk be wrestling with his subject still. Oh ! if we could lay down the mind's load as we can lay down the body's ! If the mind could sit down and rest for a breathing space, as the body can in climbing a hill ! If, as we decidedly stop walking when we cease to walk, we could cease thinking when we intend to cease to think ! It was doubtless a great secret of the work which Napoleon did with so little apparent wear, that he could fall asleep whenever he chose. Yet even he could not at will look away from the pigsty : no doubt one suddenly pressed itself upon his view on that day when he was sitting alone at dinner, and in a moment sprang up with a furious execration, and kicked over the table, smashing his plates as drunken Scotch weavers sometimes do. Let us do our best to right the wrong ; but when we have done our best, and go to something else, let us quite forget the wrong ; it will do no good to remember it now. It is long-continued wear that kills. We can do and bear a vast deal if we have blinks of intermission of bearing and doing. But the mind of some men is on the stretch from the moment they begin a task till they end it.

Slightly and rapidly as you may run over this essay, it was never half-an-hour out of the writer's waking thoughts from the writing of the first line to the writing of the last. I have known those who when busied with any work, legal, literary, theological, parochial, domestic, hardly ever consciously ceased from it ; but were, as Mr. Bailey has expressed it, 'about it, lashing at it day and night.' The swell continued though the wind had gone down ; the wheels spun round though the steam was shut off. Let me say here (I say it for myself), that apart entirely from any consideration of the religious sanctions which hallow a certain day of the seven, it appears to me that its value is literally and really inestimable to the overworked and worried man, if it be kept sacred, not merely from worldly work, but from the intrusion of worldly cares and thoughts. The thing can be done, my friend. As the last hour of Saturday strikes, the burden may fall from the mind : the pack of worries may be whipped off ; and you may feel that you have entered on a purer, freer, happier life, which will last for four-and-twenty hours. I am a Scotchman and a Scotch clergyman, and I hold views regarding the Sunday with which I know that some of my most esteemed friends do not sympathise ; but I believe, for myself, that a strict resolution to preserve the Lord's-day sacred (in no Puritanical sense), would lengthen many a valuable



life ; would preserve the spring of many a noble mind ; would hold off in some cases the approaches of imbecility or insanity.

I do not forget, in urging the expediency of training the mind to turn away from worries which it will do no good to continue to look at, that anything evil or painful has a peculiar power to attract and compel attention to it. A little bad thing bulks larger on the mind's view than a big good thing. It persistently pushes its ugly face upon our notice. You cannot forget that you have bad tooth-ache, though it be only one little nerve that is in torment, and all the rest of the body is at ease. And some little deformity of person, some little worry in your domestic arrangements, keeps always intruding itself, and defying you to forget or overlook it. If the pigsty already referred to be placed in the middle of the pretty lawn before your door, it will blot out all the landscape : you will see nothing save the pigsty. Evil has the advantage of good in many ways. It not merely detracts from good : it neutralises it all. I think it is Paley who says that the evils of life supply no just argument against the divine benevolence ; inasmuch as when weighed against the blessings of life, the latter turn the scale. It is as if you gave a man five hundred a-year, and then took away from him one hundred : this would amount virtually to giving him a clear four hundred a-year. It

always struck me that the case put is not analogous to the fact. The four hundred a-year left would lose no part of their marketable value when the one hundred was taken away. The fact is rather as if you gave a man a large jug of pure water, and then cast into it a few drops of black-draught. That little infusion of senna would render the entire water nauseous. No doubt there might be fifty times as much pure water as vile senna : but the vile senna would spoil the whole. Even such is the influence of evil in this system of things. It does not simply diminish the quantity of good to be enjoyed : to a great degree it destroys the enjoyment of the whole of the good. Good carries weight in the race with evil. It has not a fair start, nor a fair field. Don't you know, reader, that it needs careful, constant training to give a child a good education ; and possibly you may not succeed in giving the good education after all : while no care at all suffices to give a bad education ; and a bad education is generally successful. So in the physical world. No field runs to wheat. If a farmer wants a crop of good grain, he must work hard to get it. But he has only to neglect his field and do nothing, and he will have weeds enough. The whole system of things in this world tends in favour of evil rather than of good. But happily, my friend, we know the reason why. And we know that a day is coming which will set these things right.

I trust I have made sufficiently plain the precise error against which this essay is directed. The thing with which I find fault is that querulous, discontented, unhappy disposition which sits down and broods over disagreeables and worries ; not with the view of mending them, nor of bracing the moral nature by the sight of them : but simply for the sake of harping upon that tedious string ;—of making yourself miserable, and making all who come near you miserable too. There are people into whose houses you cannot go without being sickened by the long catalogue of all their slights and worries. It is a wretched and contemptible thing to be always hawking about one's griefs, in the hope of exciting commiseration. Let people be assured that their best friends will grow wearied of hearing of their worries : let people be assured that the pity which is accorded them will be in most cases mingled with something of contempt. There are men and women who have a wonderful scent for a grievance. If you are showing them your garden, and there be one untidy corner, they will go straight to that, and point it out with mournful elation, and forget all the rest of the trim expanse. If there be one mortifying circumstance in an otherwise successful and happy lot, they will be always reminding you of that. You write a book. Twenty favourable reviews of it appear, and two unfavourable : Mr. Snarling arrives after breakfast, sure as fate, with the two unfavourable

reviews in his pocket. You are cheerful and contented with your lot and your house : Mr. Snarling never misses an opportunity of pointing out to you the dulness of your situation, the inconvenience of your dwelling, the inferiority of the place you hold in life to what you might *à priori* have anticipated. You are quite light-hearted when Mr. Snarling enters ; but when he goes, you cannot help feeling a good deal depressed. The blackest side of things has been pressed on your notice during his stay. I do not think this is entirely the result of malice. It is ignorance of the right way to face little worries. The man has got a habit of looking only at the dunghill. Would that he could learn better sense !

Let me here remark a certain confusion which exists in the minds of many. I have known persons who prided themselves on their ability to inflict pain on others. They thought it a proof of power. And no doubt to scarify a man as Luther and Milton did, as Croker, Lockhart, and Macaulay did, is a proof of power. But sometimes people inflict pain on others simply by making themselves disgusting ; and to do this is no proof of power. No doubt you may severely pain a refined and cultivated man or woman by revolting vulgarity of language and manner. You may, Mrs. Bouncer, embitter your poor governess's life by your coarse, petty

tyranny; and you may infuriate your servants by talking at them before strangers at table. But let me remind you that there is a dignified and an undignified way of inflicting pain. There are what may be called the Active and the Passive ways. You may inflict annoyance as a viper does; or you may inflict annoyance as a dunghill does. Some men (sharp critics belong to this class) are like the viper. They actively give pain. You are afraid of *them*. Others, again, are like a dunghill. They are merely passively offensive. You are disgusted at these. Now the viperish man may perhaps be proud of his power of stinging: but the dunghill man has no reason earthly to be proud of his power of stinking. It is just that he is an offensive object, and men would rather get out of his way. Yet I have heard a blockhead boast how he had driven away a refined gentleman from a certain club. No doubt he did. The gentleman could never go there without the blockhead offensively revolting him. The blockhead told the story with pride. Other blockheads listened, and expressed their admiration of his cleverness. I looked in the blockhead's face, and inwardly said, Oh, you human dunghill! Think of a filthy sewer boasting, 'Ah, I can drive most people away from *me*!'

To the dunghill class many men belong. Such, generally, are those who will never heartily say anything pleasant; but who are always ready to drop

hints of what they think it will be disagreeable for you to hear. Such are the men who will walk round your garden, when you show it to them in the innocent pride of your heart : and after having accomplished the circuit, will shrug their shoulders, snuff the air, and say nothing. Such are the men who will call upon an old gentleman, and incidentally mention that they were present the other Sunday when his son preached his first sermon, but say no kindly word as to the figure made by the youthful divine. Such are the men who, when you show them your fine new church, will walk round it hurriedly, say carelessly ‘ Very nice ; ’ and begin to talk earnestly upon topics not connected with ecclesiastical architecture. And such, as a general rule, are all the envious race, who will never cordially praise anything done by others, and who turn green with envy and jealousy if they even hear others speak of a third party in words of cordial praise. Such men are for the most part under-bred, and always of third or fourth-rate talent. A really able man heartily speaks well of the talent that rivals or eclipses his own. He does so through the necessity of a noble and magnanimous nature. And a gentleman will generally do as much, through the influence of a training which makes the best of the best features in the character of man. It warms one’s heart to hear a great and illustrious author speak of a young one who is struggling up the slope. But it

is a sorry thing to hear Mr. Snarling upon the same subject.

I have sometimes wondered whether what is commonly called *coolness* in human beings is the result of a remarkable power of looking away from things which it is not thought desirable to see ; or of a still more remarkable power of looking at disagreeable things and not minding. You remember somewhere in the *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, we are told of a certain joyous dinner-party at his house in Castle-street. Of all the gay party there was none so gay as a certain West Country baronet. Yet in his pocket he had a letter containing a challenge which he had accepted ; and next morning early he was off to the duel in which he was killed. Now, there must have been a woful worry gnawing at the clever man's heart, you would say. How did he take it so coolly ? Did he really forget for the time the risk that lay before him ? Or did he look fairly at it, yet not care ? He was a kind-hearted man as well as a brave one : surely he must have been able, through the jovial evening, to look quite away from the possibility of a distracted widow, and young children left fatherless. Sometimes this coolness appears in base and sordid forms : it is then the result of obtuseness of nature—of pure lack of discernment and feeling. People thus qualified are able with entire composure to do things which others

could not do to save their lives. Such are the people who constitute a class which is an insufferable nuisance of civilised society—the class of uninvited and unwelcome guests. I am thinking of people who will without any invitation push themselves and their baggage into the house of a man who is almost a stranger to them; and in spite of the studied presentation of the cold shoulder, and in spite of every civil hint that their presence is most unwelcome, make themselves quite at home for so long as it suits them to remain. I have heard of people who would come, to the number of three or four, to the house of a poor gentleman to whom every shilling was a consideration; and without invitation remain for four, six, ten weeks at a stretch. I have heard of people who would not only come uninvited to stay at a small house, but bring with them some ugly individual whom its host had never seen: and possibly a mangy dog in addition. And such folk will with great freedom drink the wine, little used by that plain household, and hospitably press the ugly individual to drink it freely too. I declare there is something that approaches the sublime in the intensity of such folk's stolidity. They *will not* see that they are not wanted. They jauntily make themselves quite at home. If they get so many weeks' board and lodging, they don't care how unpleasantly it is given. They will write for your carriage to meet them at the railway station, as if they were ordering



a hackney-coach. This subject, however, is too large to be taken up here : it must have an entire essay to itself. But probably my reader will agree with me in thinking that people may possess in an excessive degree the valuable power of looking away from what they don't wish to see.

And yet—and yet—do you not feel that it is only by turning your mind's eye away from many thoughts which are but too intrusive, that you can hope to enjoy much peace or quiet in such a world as this ? How could you feel any relish for the comforts of your own cheerful lot if you did not forget the wretchedness, anxiety, and want which enter into the pinched and poverty-stricken lot of others ? You do not like, when you lay yourself down at night on your quiet bed, to think of the poor wretch in the condemned cell of the town five miles off, who will meet his violent death to-morrow in the dismal drizzling dawn. Some, I verily believe, will not sympathise with the feeling. There are persons, I believe, who could go on quite comfortably with their dinner with a starving beggar standing outside the window and watching each morsel they eat with famished eyes. Perhaps there are some who would enjoy their dinner all the better ; and to that class would belong (if indeed he be not a pure, dense, unmitigated, unimprovable blockhead, who did not understand or feel the force of what he said) that man who

lately preached a sermon in which he stated that a great part of the happiness of heaven would consist in looking down complacently on the torments of hell, and enjoying the contrast! What an idea must that man have had of the vile, heartless selfishness of a soul in bliss! No. For myself, though holding humbly all that the Church believes and the Bible teaches, I say that if there be a mystery hard of explanation, it is how the happy spirit can be happy even *There*, though missing from its side those who in this life were dearest. You remember the sublime prayer of Aquinas—a prayer for Satan himself. You remember the gush of kindness which made Burns express a like sorrow even for the dark Father of Evil: ‘I’m wae to think upon your den, Even for your sake!’ No. The day *may* come when it will not grieve us to contemplate misery which is intolerable and irremediable: but this will be because we shall then have gained such clear and right views of all things, that we shall see things as they appear to God, and then doubtless see that all he does is right. But we may be well assured that it will not be the selfish satisfaction of contrasting our own happiness with that misery which will enable us to contemplate it with complacency: it will be a humble submission of our own will to the One Will that is always wise and right. Yet you remember, reader, how one of the profoundest and acutest of living theologians is fain to have

recourse, in the case of this saddest of all sad thoughts, to the same relief which I have counselled for life's little worries—oh how little when we think of this ! Archbishop Whately, in treating of this great difficulty, suggests the idea that in a higher state the soul may have the power of as decidedly turning the thoughts away from a painful subject, as we now have of turning the eyes away from a disagreeable sight.

I thought of these things this afternoon in a gay and stirring scene. It was a frozen lake of considerable extent, lying in a beautiful valley, at the foot of a majestic hill. The lake was covered with people, all in a state of high enjoyment : scores of skaters were flying about, and there was a roaring of curling-stones like the distant thunder that was heard by Rip Van Winkle. The sky was blue and sunshiny ; the air crisp and clear ; the cliffs, slopes, and fields around were fair with untrodden snow ; but still one could not quite exclude the recollection that this brisk frost, so bracing and exhilarating to us, is the cause of great suffering to multitudes. The frost causes most outdoor work to cease. No building, no fieldwork, can go forward, and so, the frost cuts off the bread from many hungry mouths ; and fireless rooms and thin garments are no defence against this bitter chill. Well, you would never be cheerful at all but for the blessed gift of occasional

forgetfulness ! Those who have seen things too accurately as they are, have always been sorrowful even when unsoured men. Here, you man (one of six or seven eager parties with chairs and gimlets), put on my skates. Don't bore that hole in the heel of the boot too deep ; you may penetrate to something more sensitive than leather. Screw in ; buckle the straps, but not too tight : and now we are on our feet, with the delightful sense of freedom to fly about in any direction with almost the smooth swiftness of a bird. Come, my friend, let us be off round the lake, with long strokes, steadily, and not too fast. We may not be quite like Sidney's Arcadian shepherd-boy, piping as if he never would grow old ; yet let us be like kindly skaters, forgetting, in the exhilarating exercise that quickens the pulse and flushes the cheek, that there are such things as evil and worry in this world !

## CHAPTER V.

## CONCERNING THE DIGNITY OF DULNESS.

**I**F any man wishes to write with vigour and decision upon one side of any debated question, it is highly expedient that he should write before he has thought much or long upon the debated question. For calmly to look at a subject in all its bearings, and dispassionately to weigh that which may be said *pro* and *con*, is destructive of that unhesitating conviction which takes its side and keeps it without a misgiving whether it be the right side, and which discerns in all that can be said by others, and in all that is suggested by one's own mind, only something to confirm the conclusion already arrived at. It must be often a very painful thing to have what may be termed a *judicial mind*—that is, a mind so entirely free from bias of its own, that in forming its opinion upon any subject, it is decided simply by the merits of the case as set before it. For the arguments on either side are sometimes all but exactly balanced: yet it may be necessary

to say Yes to the one side and No to the other ; it may be impossible to make a compromise—i. e., to say to both sides at once both Yes and No. And if great issues depend upon the conclusion come to, a conscientious man may undergo an indescribable distraction and anguish before he concludes what to believe or to do. If a man be Lord Chancellor, or General commanding an army in action, there must often be keen misery in the incapacity to decide which of two competing courses has most to say for itself. Oh, that every question could be answered rightly by either Yes or No ! Oh, that one side in every quarrel, in every debate, were decidedly right, and the other decidedly wrong ! Or, if *that* cannot be, the next blessing that is to be desired by a human being who wishes to be of use where God has put him in this world, is, the gift of vigorous and intelligent one-sidedness ; for in practice conflicting views are often so nearly balanced, and the loss of time and energy caused by indecision is so great, that it is better to adopt the wrong view resolutely, and act upon it unhesitatingly, than to adopt the right view dubiously, and take the right path falteringly, and often looking back. And one feels somehow as if there was something degrading in indecision ; something manly and dignified in a vigorous will, provided that vigorous will be barely clear of the charge of blind, uncalculating obstinacy. For the spiritual is unquestionably a higher thing

than the material : the living is better than the inert, the man than the machine. But the judicial mind approaches to the nature of a machine. It seems to lack the power of originating action ; to be determined entirely by foreign forces. It is simply a very delicate pair of scales. In one scale you put all that can be said on one side, in the other scale you put all that can be said on the other side, and the beam passively follows the greater weight. Of course, the analogy between the physical and the spiritual is never perfect. The scales which weigh argument differ in various respects from the scales which weigh sugar or tea. The material weighing-machine accepts its weights at the value marked upon them ; while the spiritual weighing-machine has the additional anguish of deciding whether the argument put into it shall be esteemed as an ounce, a pound, or a ton.

All this which has been said has been keenly felt by the writer in thinking of the subject of the present essay. I am sorry now that I did not begin to write it sooner. I could then have taken my side without a scruple, and have expressed an opinion which would have been resolute if not perfectly right. Various facts which came within my observation impressed upon me the fact that, in the judgment of very many people, there is a dignity about dulness. Various considerations suggested themselves as tending to prove that it is absurd to regard

dulness as a dignified thing; and the business of the essay was designed to be, first, to state and illustrate the common view, and next, to show that the common view is absurd. But who is there that does not know how in most instances, if it strikes you on a first glance that the majority of mankind hold and act upon a belief that is absurd, longer thought shakes your confident opinion, and ultimately you land in the conviction that the majority of mankind are quite right? The length of time requisite to reach those second thoughts which are proverbially best, varies much. It seems to require a lifetime (at least for men of warm heart and quick brain) to arrive at calm, enduring sense in the complications of political and social science. In the mellow autumn of his days, the man who started as a republican, communist, and atheist, has settled (never again to be moved) into liberal conservatism and unpretending Christianity. It requires two or three years (reckoning from the first inoculation with the poison) to return to common sense in metaphysics. For myself, it cost a week of constant thought to reach my present wit-stand, which may be briefly expressed as follows. Although many men carry their belief in the dignity of dulness to an unjustifiable excess, yet there is no small amount of sense in the doctrine of the dignity of dulness. Thus, in the lengthening light of various, April evenings, did the writer muse; thus, while looking at many



crocuses, yellow in the sun of several April mornings. Why is it, thought I, that dulness is dignified? Why is it, that to write a book which no mortal can read, because it is so heavy and uninteresting, is a more dignified thing than to write a book so pleasing and attractive that it shall be read (not as work, but as play) by thousands? Why is it that any article, essay, or treatise, which handles a grave subject and propounds grave truth, only in an interesting and readable style, is at once marked with the black cross of contempt, by being referred to the class of *light literature*, and spoken of as flimsy, flashy, slight, and the like; while a treatise on the self-same subject, setting out the self-same views, only in a ponderous, wearisome, unreadable, and (in brief) *dull* fashion, is regarded as a composition solid, substantial, and eminently respectable? Is it not hard, that by many stupid people a sermon is esteemed as deep, massive, theological, solid, simply because it is such that they find they cannot for their lives attend to it; and another sermon is held as flimsy, superficial, flashy, light, simply because it attracts or compels their attention? And I saw that the doctrine of the dignity of dulness, as held by commonplace people, is at the first glance mischievous and absurd; and apparently invented by stupid men for their encouragement in their stupidity. But gradually the thought developed itself, that rapidity of movement is inconsistent with

dignity. Dignity is essentially a slow thing. Agility of mind, no less than of body, befits it not. Rapid processes of thought, quick turns of feeling—a host of the little arts and characteristics which give interest to composition—have too much of the nimble and mercurial about them. A harlequin in ceaseless motion is undignified; a Chief Justice, sitting very still on the bench and scarcely moving, save his hands and head, is tolerably dignified; the King of Siam at a state pageant, sitting in a gallery in a sumptuous dress, and so immovable, even to his eyes, that foreign ambassadors have doubted whether he were not a wax figure, is very dignified; but the most dignified of all (in the belief of millions of people of extraordinary stupidity) was the Hindoo deity Brahm, who through innumerable ages remained in absolute quiescence, never stirring, and never doing anything whatever. So here, I thought, is the key of the mystery. There is a general prepossession that slowness has more dignity than agility; and a particular application of this general prepossession leads to a common belief, sometimes grossly absurd, sometimes not without reason, that dulness is a dignified thing.

Would you know, my youthful reader, how to earn the high estimation of the great majority of steady-going old gentlemen? I will tell you how. You have, in the morning, attended a public meeting for some religious or benevolent purpose.

Many speeches were made there. In the evening you meet at dinner a grave and cautious man, advanced in years, whom you beheld in a seat of eminence on the platform ; and you begin to discourse of the speeches with him. Call to your remembrance the speech you liked best—the interesting, stirring, thrilling one that wakened you up when the others had well-nigh sent you to sleep—the speech that you held your breath to listen to, and that made your nerves tingle and your heart beat faster ; and say to the old gentleman, ‘ Do you remember Mr. A.’s speech ? Mere flash ! Very superficial. Flimsy. All figures and flowers. Flights of fancy. Nothing solid. Very well for superficial people, but nothing there for people who think.’ Then fix on the very dullest and heaviest of all the speeches made. Fix on the speech that you could not force yourself to listen to, though, when you did by a great effort follow two or three sentences, you saw it was very good sense, but insufferably dull ; and say to the old gentleman, ‘ Very different with the speech of Mr. B. Ah, there was mind *there* ! Something that you could grasp ! Good sound sense. No flash. None of your extravagant flights of imagination. Admirable matter. Who cares for oratory ? Give me substance !’ Say all this, my youthful reader, to the solid old gentleman ; and you will certainly be regarded by him as a young man of sound sense, and with taste and judg-

ment mature beyond your years. And if you wish to deepen the favourable impression you have made, you may go on to complain of the triviality of modern literature. Say that you think the writings of Mr. Dickens wearisome and unimproving; for your part, you would rather read the sermons of Doctor Log. Say that *Fraser's Magazine* is flip-pant: you prefer the *Journal of the Statistical Society*. You cannot go wrong. You have an unerring rule. You have merely to consider what things, books, speeches, articles, sermons, you find most dull and stupid: then declare in their favour. Acknowledge the grand principle of the dignity of dulness. So shall the old gentleman tell his fellows that you have 'got a head.' There is 'something in you.' You are an 'uncommon fine young man.' The truth meanwhile will be, either that you are an impostor, shamming what you do not think; or a man of most extraordinary and anomalous tastes; or an incorrigible blockhead.

But whatever you may be yourself, do not fall into error in your judgment of the old gentleman and his compeers. Do not think of him uncharitably. If he made a speech at the meeting, you may be ready to conclude that the reason why he preferred the dull speech to the brilliant one is, that his own speech was very, very dull. And no doubt, in some cases, it is envy and jealousy that prompt the commonplace man to undervalue the brilliant

appearances of the brilliant man. It must be a most soothing thought to the ambitious man of inferior ability, that the speech, sermon, or volume which greatly surpasses his own shall be regarded by many as not so good as his own, just because it is so incomparably better. It would be a pleasing arrangement for all race-horses which are lame and broken-winded, that because Eclipse distances the field so far, Eclipse shall therefore be adjudged to have lost the race. And precisely analogous is the floating belief in many commonplace minds, that if a discourse or composition be brilliant, it cannot be solid ; that if it be interesting, this proves it to be flimsy. No doubt brilliancy is sometimes attained at the expense of solidity ; no doubt some writings and speeches are interesting whose body of thought is very slight ; which, as Scotch people say, *have very little in them*. But the vulgar belief on this matter really amounts to this : that if a speech, sermon, or book be very good, this proves it to be very bad. And as most people who produce such things produce very bad ones, you may easily see how willingly this belief is accepted by most people. Still, this does not entirely explain the opinion expressed by the old gentleman already mentioned. It does not necessarily follow that he declares the speech of Mr. A. to be bad simply because he knows it was provokingly good, nor that he declares the speech of Mr. B. to be good simply because he

knows it was soothingly bad. The old gentleman may have been almost or even entirely sincere in the opinion he expressed. By long habit, and by pushing into an extreme a belief which has a *substratum* of truth, he may have come to regard with suspicion the speech which interests him ; and to take for granted, with little examination of the facts of the case, that it *must* be flimsy and slight, else he could not take it in so pleasantly and easily. And all this founds not merely on the grand principle of the dignity of dulness, but likewise on the impassable nature of the gulf which parts instruction from amusement, work from play. Work, it is assumed as an axiom, is of the nature of pain. To get solid instruction costs exertion : it is work : it is a painful thing. And the consequence is, that when a man of great skill and brilliant talent is able to present solid instruction in a guise so attractive that it becomes pleasant instead of painful to receive it, you are startled. Your suspicions are aroused. You begin to think that he must have sacrificed the solid and the useful. This cannot be work, you think : it must be play, for it is pleasant. This cannot be instruction, you think : it must be amusement, for it is easy and agreeable to follow it. This cannot be a right sermon, you think, for it does not put me asleep : it must be a flimsy and flashy declamation : or some such disparaging expression is used. This cannot be the normal essay, you think, for you read

it through without yawning ; you don't know what is wrong, but you are safe in saying that its order of thought must be very light ; the fact that you could read it without yawning proves that it is so. You forget the alternative, that solid and weighty thought, both in essay and sermon, may have been made easy to follow, by the interesting fashion in which they were put before you. But stupid people forget this alternative: they never think of it, or they reject it at the first mention of it. It is too absurd. It ignores the vital difference between work and play. Try a parallel case with an unsophisticated understanding, and you will see how ingrained in our nature is this prejudice. Your little boy is ill. He must have some medicine. You give him some of a most nauseous taste. He takes it, and feels certain that it will make him well. It *must* be medicine, he knows ; and good medicine ; because it is so abominably disagreeable. But give the little man some healing balm (if you can find it) whose taste is pleasant. He is surprised. His faith in the medicine is shaken. It won't make him well ; it cannot be right medicine ; because to take it is not painful or disagreeable. A poor girl in the parish was dying of consumption. Her parents had heard of cod-liver oil. They got the livers of certain cod-fish and manufactured oil for themselves. It was hideous to see, to smell, and to taste. I procured a bottle of the proper oil, and took it up

to my poor parishioner. But it was plain that neither she nor her parents had much faith in it. It was not disgusting. It had little taste or odour. It was easy to take. And it was plain, though the girl used it to please me, that the belief in the cottage was, that by eliminating the disgusting element, you eliminated the virtue of the oil ; in brief, that when medicine ceases to be disagreeable, it ceases to be useful. There is in human nature an inveterate tendency to judge so. And it was this inveterate tendency, much more than any spirit of envy or jealousy, that was at the foundation of the old man's opinion, that the dull speech or sermon was the best ; that the interesting speech or sermon was flimsy. All the virtue of the cod-liver oil was there, though the nauseous accompaniments were gone ; and solid thought and sound reasoning may have been present in quantity as abundant and quality as admirable in the interesting speech as in the dull one ; but it is to be confessed the *à priori* presumption was the other way. There must be something—you don't know what—wrong about the work which is as pleasant as play. There must be something—you cannot say what—amiss about the sermon which is as interesting as a novel. It cannot be sound instruction, which is as agreeable as amusement ; any more than black can be white, or pain can be pleasure. That is the unspoken, undefined, ineradicable belief of the dull majority of



human kind. And it appears, day by day, in the depreciatory terms in which stupid, and even commonplace people talk of compositions which are brilliant, interesting, and attractive, as though the fact of their possessing these characteristics were proof sufficient that they lack solidity and sound sense.

Now, the root of the prevalent error (so far as it is an error) appears to me to lie in this ; that sound instruction and solid thought are regarded as analogous to *medicine* ; whereas they ought to be regarded as analogous to *food*. It may possibly be assumed, that medicine is a thing such in its essential nature, that to be useful, it must be disagreeable. But I believe that it is now universally admitted, that the food which is most pleasant to take, is the most wholesome and nutritious. The time is past in which philosophic and strong-minded persons thought it a fine thing to cry up a Spartan repulsiveness in the matter of diet. Raw steaks, cut from a horse which died a natural death ; and the sour milk of mares ; are no longer considered the provender upon which to raise men who shall be of necessity either thoughtful or heroic. Unhappily, in the matter of the dietetics of the mind, the old notion still prevails with very many. And there is something to be said for it ; but only what might also be said for it in regard to the food of the body. For though, as a general rule, the most agreeable food is the most wholesome, yet there is an extensive kingdom into

which this law does not extend ; I mean the domain of sugar-plums, of pastry, of crystallised fruits, and the like. These are pleasant : but you cannot live upon them ; and you ought not to take much at a time. And if you give a child the unlimited run of such materials for eating, the child will assuredly be the worse for it. Well, in mental food the analogy holds. Here, too, is a realm of sweets, of devilled bones, of curaçao. Feverish poetry : ultra-sentimental romance ; eccentric wit and humour ; are the parallel things. Rabelais ; Sterne ; *The Doctor* of Southey ; the poetry of Mrs. Hemans ; the plays of Otway, Marlowe, Ford, and Dekker ; may all, in limited quantity, be partaken of with relish and advantage by the healthy appetite ; but let there not be too much of them ; and do not think to nourish your intellectual nature on such food alone. No child, shiny with excessive pastry, or tooth-aching and sulky through superabundant sugar-plums, is in a plight more morbid and disagreeable than is the clever boy or girl of eighteen, who from the dawn of the taste for reading, has been turned into a large library to choose books at will, and who has crammed an inexperienced head and undisciplined heart with extravagant fancies and unreal feelings from an exclusive diet of novels and plays. But, setting aside the department of sweets, I maintain, that given wholesome food, the more agreeably it is cooked and served up, the better ; and given sound thought, the

more interesting and attractive the guise in which it is presented, the better. And all this may be, without the least sacrifice of the sound and substantial qualities. No matter what you are writing—sermon, article, book—let Sydney Smith's principle be remembered, that *every style is good, except the tiresome*. And who does not know, that there have been men who, without the least sacrifice of solidity, have invested all they had to say with an enchain-  
ing interest ; and led the reader through the most abstruse metaphysics, the closest reasoning, the most intricate mazes of history, the gravest doctrines of theology, in such fashion that the reader was profited while he thought he was only being delighted, and charmed while he was informed? The thing has been done ; of course it is very difficult to do it ; and to do it demands remarkable gifts of nature and training. The extraordinary thing is that where a man has, by much pains, or by extraordinary felicity, added interest to utility—given you solid thought in an attractive form—many people will, and that not entirely of envy, but through *bonâ fide* stupidity, at once say that the interesting sermon, the picturesque history, the lively argument, is flimsy and flashy, superficial, wanting in depth, and so forth. Yet if you think it unpardonable in the cook, who has excellent food given to prepare, to send it up spoiled, and barely eatable, is it not quite as bad in the man who has given to him important facts,

solemn doctrines, weighty reasons, yet who presents them to his readers or hearers in a tough, dry, stupid shape? Does the turbot, the saddle of mutton, cease to be nutritious because it is well cooked? And wherefore, then, should the doctrine or argument become flimsy because it is put skilfully and interestingly? I do believe there are people who think that in the world of mind, if a good beef-steak be well cooked, it turns in the process into a stick of barley-sugar.

To this class belongs the great majority of stupid people, and also of quiet steady-going people, of fair average ability. Among the latter there is not only a dislike of clever men, arising from envy: but a real, honest fear of what they may do, arising from a belief that a very clever man cannot be a safe or judicious man, and that a striking view cannot be a sound view. Once upon a time, in a certain church, I heard a sermon preached by a certain great preacher. The congregation listened with breathless attention. The sermon was indeed a very remarkable one; and I remember well how I thought that never before had I understood the magic spell which is exerted by fervid eloquence. And walking away from church, I was looking back upon the track of thought over which the preacher had borne the congregation, and thinking how skilfully and admirably he had carried his hearers, easily and interestedly, through very difficult ground, and over a

very long journey. Thus musing, I encountered a very stupid clergyman who had been in church too. 'Did you hear Mr. M.?' said he. 'It was mere flash; very flimsy; all flowers. Nothing solid.' With wonder I regarded my stupid friend. I said to him: Strip off from the sermon all the fancy and all the feeling; look at the bare skeleton of thought: and then I stated it to the man. Is not *that*, said I, a marvel of metaphysical acuteness, of rigorous logic, of exact symmetry? Cut off the flash, as you call it; here is the solid residuum; is *that* slight or flashy? Is there not three times the thought of ordinary humdrum sermons even in quantity, not to name the incalculable difference in the matter of quality? On the latter point, indeed, I did not insist; for with some folk quantity is the only measure of thought; and in the world of ideas a turnip is with such equal to a pine apple, provided they be of the same size. 'Don't you see,' said I, with growing wrath, to my stupid friend, who regarded me meanwhile with a stolid stare, 'that it only shows what an admirable preacher Mr. M. is, if he was able to carry a whole congregation in rapt attention along a line of thought in traversing which you and I would have put all our hearers asleep? You and I might possibly have given the thought like the diamond as it comes from the mine, a dull pebble; and because that eminent man gave it polished and glancing, is it therefore not a

diamond still?' Of course it was vain to talk. The stolid preacher kept by his one idea. The sermon could not be solid, because it was brilliant. Because there was gleam and glitter, there could not be anything besides. What more could be said? I knew that my stupid friend had on his side the majority of the race.

It is irritating, when you have written an essay with care after a great deal of thought, to find people talk slightly of it as very light. 'The essays of Mr. Q. are sensible and well-written, but the order of thought is of the lightest.' I found these words in a review of certain essays, written by a man who had evidently read the essays. Ask people what they mean by such vague phrases of disparagement; and if you can get them to analyse their feeling, you will find that in five cases out of six, they mean simply that they can read the compositions with interest. Is *that* anything against them? *That* does not touch the question whether they are weighty and sound. They may be sound and weighty for all that. Of course that which is called *severe thought* cannot, however, skilfully put and illustrated, be so easily followed by undisciplined minds. But in most cases the people who talk of a man's writings being light, know nothing at all about severe thinking. They mean that they are sure that an essay is solid if they find it uninteresting. It must be good if it be a weary task to get through

it. The lack of interest is the great test that the composition is of a high order. It must be dignified, because it is so dull. You read it with pleasure ; therefore it must be flimsy. You read it with weariness ; therefore it must be solid. Or, to put the principle in its simplest form—the essay must be bad, because it is so good. The essay must be good, because it is so bad. Here we have the foundation principle of the grand doctrine of the dignity of dulness.

And, by hosts of people, the principle is unsparingly applied. An interesting book is flimsy, because it is interesting. An interesting sermon is flimsy, because it is interesting. They are referred to the class of light literature. And it is undignified to be light. It is grand, it is clerical, it is worthy of a cabinet minister, it is even archiepiscopal, to write a book which no one would voluntarily read. But some stupid people think it unclerical to write a book which sensible folk will read with pleasure. It would amuse Mr. Kingsley, and I am sure it would do no more than amuse him, to hear what I have heard steady-going individuals say about his writings. The question whether the doctrines he enforces be true or not, they cared not for at all. Neither did they inquire whether or not he enforces, with singular fervour and earnestness, certain doctrines of far-reaching practical moment. *That* matters not. He enforces them in books which it is interesting and even

enchaining to read ; and this suffices (in their judgment) to condemn these books. I have heard stupid people say that it was not worthy of Archbishop Whately to write those admirable *Annotations on Bacon's Essays*. No doubt, that marvellously acute intellect does in those *Annotations* apply itself to a great variety of themes and purposes, greater and lesser, like a steam-hammer which can weld a huge mass of red-hot iron, and with equal facility drive a nail into a plank by successive gentle taps. No doubt the volume sometimes discusses grave matters in a grave manner, and sometimes matters less grave (but still with a serious bearing on life and its affairs) in a playful manner. But on the whole, if you wished to convey to a stranger to the Archbishop's writings (supposing that among educated people you could find one) some notion of the extent and versatility of his powers, it is probable that, of all his books, *this* is the one you would advise the stranger to read. 'Not so,' said my friend Dr. Log. 'The Archbishop should not have published such a work. Who ever heard of an Archbishop who wrote a book which young men and women would read because they enjoyed it ?' The book could not be dignified, because it was not dull. Why did the steady old gentlemen among the fellows of a certain college in the University of Cambridge, a good many years ago, turn out and vote against a certain clergyman's becoming their Head, who was infinitely the



most distinguished of their number, and upon whose becoming their Head every one had counted with certainty? He was a very distinguished scholar, a very successful tutor : a man of dignified manners and irreproachable character. Had he been no more, he had been the head of his college, and he had been a bishop now. But there was an objection which, in the minds of these frail but steady old gentlemen, could not be got over. *His sermons were interesting !* His warmest friends could not say that they were dull. When he came to do his duty as Select Preacher before the University, the church wherein he preached was crowded to excess. Not merely was the unbecoming spectacle witnessed of all the pews being filled ; but it could not be concealed that the passages were crowded with human beings who were content to stand throughout the service. The old gentlemen could not bear this. The Head of a college must be dignified ; and how could a man be dignified who was not dull, even in the pulpit? The younger fellows were unanimous in the great preacher's favour ; but the old gentlemen formed the majority, and they were unanimous against him. Some people suggested that they were envious of his greater eminence : that they wished to put down the man who, at a comparatively early age, had so vastly surpassed themselves. The theory was uncharitable : it was more—it was false. Jealousy had little part in the minds of these frail but safe old men. They honestly believed that

the great preacher could not be solid or dignified, because he was brilliant and attractive. They never heard his sermons ; but they were sure that something must be wrong about the sermons, because multitudes wished to hear them. Is not the normal feeling after listening to a sermon to its close, one of gentle, unexpressed relief? The great preacher was rejected, and an excellent man was elected in his stead, who could not fail to be dignified, for never mortal was more dull. Cardinal Wiseman tells us very frankly that the great principle of the dignity of dulness is always recognised and acted on by the gentlemen who elect the Pope. Gravity, approaching to stolidity; slowness of motion, approaching to entire standing-still; are (as a general rule) requisite in the human beings who succeed to the chair of St. Peter. It has been insinuated that in the Church of England similar characteristics are (or at least were) held essential in those who are made bishops, and, above all, archbishops. You can never be sure that a man will not do wrong who is likely to do anything at all. But if it be perfectly ascertained that a man will do nothing, you may be satisfied that he will do nothing wrong. This is one consideration ; but the further one is the pure and simple dignity of dulness. A clergyman may look forward to a bishopric if he write books which are unreadable, but not if he write books which are readable. The chance of Dr. Log is infinitely better than that of Mr. Kingsley. And

nothing can be more certain than that the principle of the dignity of dulness kept the mitre from the head of Sydney Smith. I do not mean to say that he was a suitable man to be a bishop. I think he was not. But it was not because of anything really unclerical about the genial man that he was excluded. The people who excluded him did not hesitate to appoint men obnoxious to more serious charges than Sydney Smith. But then, whatever these men were or were not, they were all dull. They wrote much, some of them; but nobody ever read what they wrote. But Sydney Smith was interesting. You could read his writings with pleasure. He was unquestionably the reverse of dull, and therefore certainly the reverse of dignified. Through much of his later life the same suspicion has, with millions of safe-going folk, thrown a shadow on Lord Brougham. He was too lively. What he wrote was too interesting. Solid old gentlemen feared for his good sense. They thought they never could be sure what he would do next. Even Lord St. Leonards lost standing with many when he published his *Handy Book on Property Law*. A Lord Chancellor writing a book sold at railway stations, and read (with interest too) in railway carriages! What was the world coming to? But it was quite becoming in the great man to produce that elaborate and authoritative work on *Vendors and Purchasers*, of which I have often beheld the outside, but never the inside. And wherefore

did the book besee<sup>m</sup> a Chancellor? Wherefore but because to the ordinary reader it was heavy as lead. Have not you, my reader, often heard like criticism of Lord Campbell's interesting volumes of the biography of his predecessors? 'Very interesting; very well written; much curious information; but not quite the thing for the first man on the judicial bench of Britain to write.' Now, upon what is this criticism founded, but upon the grand principle that liveliness and interest do not become the compositions of a man in important office: in brief, that *that* is not dignified which is not dull?

But let us not be extreme. Let it be admitted that the principle has some measure of truth. There are facts which appear to give it countenance; which really do give it countenance. *Punch* is more interesting than a sermon, *that* is admitted as a fact. The tacit inference is that an interesting sermon must have become interesting by unduly approximating to *Punch*. 'There is literature which may properly be termed light. There is thought which is superficial, flimsy, slight, and so on.' There are compositions which are brilliant without being solid, in which there are many flowers and little fruit. And no doubt, by the nature of things, this light and flashy thought is more interesting, and more easily followed, than more solid material. You can read *Vanity Fair* when you could not read Butler's *Analogy*.

You can read *Punch* when you could not read *Vanity Fair*. And the *à priori* presumption may be, when you find a composition of a grave class which is as interesting as one of a lighter class, that this interest has been attained by some sacrifice of the qualities which beseeem a composition of a grave class. Let our rule be as follows: If the treatise under consideration be interesting because it treats of light subjects, which in themselves are more interesting than grave ones (as play always must be more pleasing than work), let the treatise be classed as light. But if in the treatise you find grave and serious thoughts set out in such a fashion as to be interesting, then all honour to the author of that treatise ! He is not a slight, superficial writer, though stupid people may be ready to call him so. He is, in truth, a grave and serious writer, though he has succeeded in charming while he instructs. He is truly dignified, though he be not dull. He is doing a noble work, enforcing a noble principle: the noble principle, to wit (which most people silently assume is false), that what is right need not of necessity be so very much less attractive than what is wrong. The general belief is, that right is prosy, humdrum, commonplace, dull ; and that the poetry of existence, the gleam, the music, the thrill, the romance, are with delightful wrong. And taking work as the first meridian, marking what is right, many people really hold that any approximation to play (and all that

interests and pleasures is in so far an approximation to play), is a deflection in the direction of wrong, inasmuch as it is beyond question a marked departure from the line of ascertained right. Let us get rid of the notion ! In morals, the opposite of right need not be wrong. Many things are right, and their opposites right too. Work is right. Play is the opposite of work, yet play is right too. Gravity is right : interest is right too ; and though practically these two things seem opposed, they need not be so. And as we should bless the man who would teach us how to idealise our work into play, so should we bless the man who is able to blend gravity and interest together. Such a man as Macaulay was virtually spreading the flag of defiance in the face of stupid people holding a stupid belief, and declaring by every page he wrote, that what is right need not be unpleasant ; that what is interesting need not be flimsy ; that what is dignified need not be dull.

I am well aware that it is hopeless to argue with a prejudice so rooted as that in favour of the dignity of dulness ; and especially hopeless when I am obliged to admit that I cannot entirely oppose that principle, that I feel a certain justice in it.\* Slowness of motion, I have said, is essentially more dignified than rapidity of motion. There is something dignified about an elephant walking along, with massive tramp ; there is nothing dignified about a frisking

greyhound, light, airy, graceful. And it is to be admitted that some men frisk through a subject like a greyhound; others tramp through it like an elephant. And though the playful greyhound fashion of writing, that dallies and toys with a subject, may be the more graceful and pleasing, the dignity doubtless abides with the stern, slow, straightforward elephantine tramp. The *Essays of Elia* delight you, but you stand in no awe of their author; the contrary is the case with a charge of Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough. And so thoroughly elephantine are the mental movements of some men, that even their rare friskiness is elephantine. Every one must know this who is at all acquainted with the ponderous and cow-like curvetings of *The Rambler*. Physical agility is inconsistent with physical dignity; mental agility with mental dignity. You could not for your life very greatly esteem the solemn advices given you from the pulpit on Sunday, by a clergyman whom you had seen whirling about in a polka on Friday evening. The momentum of that rotary movement would cling to him (in your feeling) still. I remember when I was a little boy what a shock it was to my impressions of judicial dignity to see a departed Chief Justice cantering down Constitution Hill on a tall thoroughbred chestnut. The swift movement befitted not my recollections of the judgment-seat, the ermine, the great full-bottomed wig. I felt aggrieved and mortified even by the tallness

and slenderness of the chestnut horse. Had the judge been mounted on a drayhorse of enormous girth and vast breadth (even if not very high), I should have been comparatively content. Breadth was the thing desiderated by the youthful heart; breadth, and the solidity which goes with breadth, and the slowness of motion which goes with solid extension, and the dignity which goes with slowness of motion. I speak of impression made on the undisciplined human soul, doubtless; but then the normal impression made by anything is the impression it makes on the undisciplined human soul. In the world of mind, you may educate human nature into a condition in which all tendencies shall be reversed; in which fire shall wet you, and water dry you. Who does not know that the estimation in which the humbler folk of a rural parish regard their clergyman, depends in a great degree upon his physical size? A man six feet high will command greater reverence than one of five feet six; but if the man of five feet six in height be six feet in circumference, then he will command greater reverence than the man of six feet in height, provided the latter be thin. And after great reflection, I am led to the conclusion, that the true cause of this bucolic dignity does not abide in mere size. Dignity, even in the country, is not in direct proportion to extension, as such. No; it is in direct proportion to that slowness of movement which comes of solid



extension. A man who walks very fast is less dignified than a man who walks very slow ; and that which conduces to the slow, ponderous, measured step, is a valuable accessory to personal dignity. But the connexion is not so essential as the unthinking might conclude between personal dignity and personal bulk. Now, the composition, whether written or spoken, of some men, is (so to speak) a display of mental agility. It is the result of rapid mental movements, you can see. Not with massive heaves and sinkings, like the engines of an ocean steam-ship, did the mental machinery play that turned off such a book, such a speech, such an essay ; but rather with rapid jerkings of little cranks, and invisible whirlings of little wheels. And the thing manufactured is pretty, not grand. It is very nice. You conclude that as the big steam-engine cannot play very fast, so the big mind too. The mind that can go at a tremendous pace, you conclude to be a little mind. The mind that can skip about, you conclude cannot be a massive mind. There are truth and falsehood in your conclusion. Very great minds, guided by very comprehensive views, have with lightning-like promptitude rushed to grand decisions and generalisations. But it cannot be denied that ponderous machinery, physical and mental, generally moves slowly. And in the mental world, many folk readily suppose that the machinery which moves slowly is certainly ponderous. A man who

gets up to speak in a deliberative assembly, and with a deep voice from an extensive chest, and inscrutable meaning depicted on massive features, slowly states his views, with long pauses between the members of his sentences, and very long pauses between his sentences, will by many people be regarded as making a speech which is very heavy metal indeed. Possibly it may be ; possibly it may not. I ought to say, that the most telling deliberative speaker I ever heard, speaks in that slow fashion. But when *he* speaks on an important subject which interests him, every deliberate word goes home like a cannon-ball. He speaks in eighty-four pound shot. But I have heard men as slow, who spoke in large soap-bubbles. And of all lightness of thought, deliver us from ponderous lightness ! Nothings are often excusable, and sometimes pleasing ; but pompous nothings are always execrable. I have known men who, morally speaking, gave away tickets for very inferior parish soup with the air of one freely dispensing invitations to the most sumptuous banquet that ever was provided by mortal. Oh ! to stick in a skewer, and see the great wind-bag collapse !

You do not respect the jack-pudding who amuses you, though he may amuse you remarkably well. The more you laugh at him, the less you respect him. And, to the vulgar apprehension, any man who amuses you, or who approaches towards amusing you, or produces anything which interests you (which

is an approximation towards amusing you), will be regarded as, *quoad hoc*, approaching undignifiedly in the direction of the jack-pudding. The only way in which to make sure that not even the vulgarest mind shall discern this approximation, is to instruct while you carefully avoid interesting, and still more amusing, even in the faintest degree. Even wise men cannot wholly divest themselves of the prejudice. You cannot but feel an inconsistency between the ideas of Mr. Disraeli writing *Henrietta Temple*, and Mr. Disraeli leading the House of Commons. You feel that somehow it costs an effort to feel that there is nothing unbefitting when the author of *The Caxtons* becomes a Secretary of State. You fancy, at the first thought, that you would have had greater confidence in some sound, steady, solid old gentleman, who never amused or interested you in any way. The office to be filled is a dignified one; and how can a man befit a dignified office who has interested and amused you so much?

But the consideration which above all others leads the sober majority of mankind to respect and value decent and well-conducted dulness, is the consideration of the outrageous practical folly, and the insufferable wickedness, which many men of genius appear to have regarded it their prerogative to indulge in. You can quite understand how plain sensible people may abhor an eccentric genius, and wish rather for sound principle and sound sense. And

probably most men whose opinion is of much value, would be thankful to have decent dulness in their nearest relations, rather than the brilliant aberrations of such men as Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge. Give us the plain man who will do his work creditably in life; who will support his children and pay his debts; rather than the very clever man who fancies that his cleverness sets him free from all the laws which bind commonplace mortals; who does not think himself called upon to work for his bread, but sponges upon industrious men, or howls out because the nation will not support him in idleness; who wonders at the sordid tradesman who asks him to pay for the clothes he wears, and leaves his children to be educated by any one who takes a fancy for doing so; who violates all the dictates of common morality and common prudence, and blasphemes because he gets into trouble by doing so; who will not dress, or eat, or sleep like other men; who wears round jackets to annoy his wife, and scribbles *Atheist* after his name in travellers' books; and in brief, who is distinguished by no characteristic so marked as the entire absence of common sense. I think, reader, that if you were sickened by a visit of a month's duration from one of these geniuses, you would resolve that for the remainder of your life only dull, commonplace, respectable mortals should ever come under your roof. Let us be thankful that the days in which high talent was generally associated with

such eccentricities are happily passing away. Clever men are now content to dress, look, and talk like beings of this world ; and above all, they appear to understand that however clever a man may be, that is no reason why he should not pay his butcher's bill. How fine a character was that of Sir Walter Scott, combining homely sense with great genius ! And how different from the hectic, morbid, unprincipled, and indeed blackguard mental organisation of various brilliant men of the last age, was Shakspeare's calm and well-balanced mind ! It is only the second-rate genius who is eccentric, and only the tenth-rate who is unintelligible.

But if one is driven to a warm sympathy with the humdrum and decently dull, by contemplating the absurdities and vagaries of men of real genius, even more decidedly is that result produced by contemplating the ridiculous little curvetings and prancings of affectedly eccentric men of no genius. You know, my reader, the provincial celebrity of daily life ; you know what a nuisance he is. You know how almost every little country town in Britain has its eminent man—its man of letters. He has written a book, or it is whispered that he writes in certain periodicals ; and simple human beings, who know nothing of proof-sheets, look upon him with a certain awe. He varies in age and appearance. If young, he wears a moustache and long dishevelled hair ; if old, a military

cloak, which he disposes in a brigand form. He walks the street with an abstracted air, as though his thoughts were wandering beyond the reach of the throng. He is fond of solitude, and he gratifies his taste by going to the most frequented places within reach, and there assuming a look of rapt isolation. Sometimes he may be seen to gesticulate wildly, and to dig his umbrella into the pavement as though it were a foeman's breast. Occasionally moody laughter may be heard to proceed from him, as from one haunted by fearful thoughts. His fat and rosy countenance somewhat belies the anguish which is preying upon his vitals. He goes much to tea-parties, where he tells the girls that the bloom of life has gone for him, and drops dark hints of the mental agony he endures in reviewing his earlier life. He bids them not to ask what is the grief that consumes him, but to be thankful that they do not, cannot know. He drops hints how the spectres of the past haunt him at the midnight hour; how conscience smites him with chilly hand for his youthful sins. The truth is that he was always a very quiet lad, and never did any harm to anybody. Occasionally, when engaged in conversation with some one on whom he wishes to make an impression, he exclaims, suddenly, 'Hold! let me register that thought.' He pauses for a minute, gazing intently on the heavens; then exclaims, 'Tis done!' and takes up the conversation

where it was interrupted. He fancies that his companion thinks him a great genius. His companion, in fact, thinks him a poor silly fool.

And now, my friend, turning away from these matters, let us sit down on this large stone, warm in the April sunshine, by the river side. Swiftly the river glides away. The sky is bright blue, the water is crystal clear, and a soft wind comes through those budding branches. In the field on the other side I see a terrier and a cow. The terrier frisks about; solemnly stands the cow. Let us think here for a while; we need not talk. And for an accompaniment to the old remembrances which such a day as this brings back, let us have the sound of that flow-

## CHAPTER VI.

## CONCERNING GROWING OLD.

I WAS sitting, on a very warm and bright summer morning, upon a gravestone in the churchyard. It was a flat gravestone, elevated upon four little pillars, and covering the spot where sleeps the mortal part of a venerable clergyman who preceded me in my parish, and who held the charge of it for sixty years. I had gone down to the churchyard, as usual, for a while after breakfast, with a little companion who in those days was generally with me wherever I went. And while she was walking about, attended by a solemn dog, I sat down in the sunshine on the stone, gray with lichen and green with moss., I thought of the old gentleman who had slept below for fifty years. I wondered if he had sometimes come to the churchyard after breakfast before he began his task of sermon-writing. I reflected how his heart, mouldered into dust, was now so free from all the



little heats and worries which will find their way into even the quietest life in this world. And sitting there, I put down my right hand upon the mossy stone. The contrast of the hand upon the green surface caught the eye of my companion, who was not four years old. She came slowly up, and laid down her own hand beside mine on the mossy expanse. And after looking at it in various ways for several minutes, and contrasting her own little hand with the weary one which is now writing this page, she asked, thoughtfully and doubtfully—Was your hand ever a little hand like mine?

Yes, I said, as I spread it out on the stone, and looked at it: it seems a very short time since that was a little hand like yours. It was a fat little hand: not the least like those thin fingers and many wrinkles now. When it grew rather bigger, the fingers had generally various deep cuts, got in making and rigging ships: those were the days when I intended to be a sailor. It gradually grew bigger, as all little hands will do, if spared in this world. And now, it has done a great many things. It has smoothed the heads of many children, and the noses of various horses. It has travelled, I thought to myself, along thousands of written pages. It has paid away money, and occasionally received it. In many things that hand has fallen short, I thought; yet several things which that hand found to do, it did with its might. So here, I thought, were three

hands, not far apart. There was the little hand of infancy ; four daisies were lying near it on the gravestone where it was laid down to compare with mine. Then the rather skinny and not very small hand, which is doing now the work of life. And a couple of yards beneath, there was another hand, whose work was over. It was a hand which had written many sermons, preached in that plain church; which had turned over the leaves of the large pulpit-Bible (very old and shabby) which I turn over now : which had often opened the door of the house where now I live. And when I got up from the gravestone, and was walking quietly homeward, many thoughts came into my mind CONCERNING GROWING OLD.

And indeed many of the most affecting thoughts which can ever enter the human mind are concerning the lapse of Time, and the traces which its lapse leaves upon human beings. There is something that touches us in the bare thought of Growing Old. I know a house on certain of whose walls there hang portraits of members of the family for many years back. It is not a grand house, where to simple minds the robes of brocade and the suits of armour fail to carry home the idea of real human beings. It is the house of a not wealthy gentleman. The portraits represent people whose minds did not run much upon deep speculations or upon practical politics ; but who no doubt had many thoughts as to

how they should succeed in getting the ends to meet. With such people does the writer feel at home : with such, probably, does the majority of his readers. I remember, there, the portrait of a frail old lady, plainly on the farthest confines of life. More than fourscore years had left their trace on the venerable head : you could fancy you saw the aged hands shaking. Opposite there hung the picture of a blooming girl, in the fresh May of beauty. The blooming girl was the mother of the venerable dame of fourscore. Painting catches but a glimpse of time ; but it keeps that glimpse. On the canvas the face never grows old. As Dekker has it, ‘ False colours last after the true be fled.’ I have often looked at the two pictures, in a confused sort of reverie. If you ask what it is that I thought of in looking at them, I truly cannot tell you. The fresh young beauty was the mother : the aged grand-dame was the child : *that* was really all. But there are certain thoughts upon which you can vaguely brood for a long time.

You remember reading how upon a day not many years since, certain miners, working far underground, came upon the body of a poor fellow who had perished in the suffocating pit forty years before. Some chemical agent to which the body had been subjected—an agent prepared in the laboratory of Nature—had effectually arrested the progress of decay. They brought it up to the surface : and for

awhile, till it crumbled away through exposure to the atmosphere, it lay there, the image of a fine sturdy young man. No convulsion had passed over the face in death: the features were tranquil; the hair was black as jet. No one recognised the face: a generation had grown up since the day on which the miner went down his shaft for the last time. But a tottering old woman, who had hurried from her cottage at hearing the news, came up: and she knew again the face which through all these years she had never quite forgot. The poor miner was to have been her husband the day after that on which he died. They were rough people, of course, who were looking on: a liberal education and refined feelings are not deemed essential to the man whose work it is to get up coals, or even tin: but there were no dry eyes there when the gray-headed old pilgrim cast herself upon the youthful corpse, and poured out to its deaf ear many words of endearment unused for forty years. It was a touching contrast: the one so old, the other so young. They had both been young, these long years ago: but time had gone on with the living and stood still with the dead. It is difficult to account for the precise kind and degree of feeling with which we should have witnessed the little picture. I state the fact: I can say no more. I mention it in proof of my principle, that a certain vague pensiveness is the result of musing upon the lapse of time; and a certain undefinable pathos of

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any incident which brings strongly home to us that lapse and its effects.

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed  
The spring beneath the tree :  
And thus the dear old man replied,  
The gray-haired man of glee :  
No check, no stay, that streamlet fears—  
How merrily it goes !  
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as now it flows.  
And here, on this delightful day,  
I cannot choose but think  
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay  
Beside this fountain's brink.  
My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred,  
For the same sound is in my ears  
Which in those days I heard.

That is really the sum of what is to be said on the subject. And it has always appeared to me that Mr. Dickens has shown an amount of philosophical insight which does not always characterise him, when he wrote certain reflections, which he puts in the mouth of one Mr. Roker, who was a turnkey in the Fleet Prison. I do not know why it should be so ; but these words are to me more strikingly truthful than almost any others which the eminent author ever produced.

'You remember Tom Martin, Neddy? Bless my dear eyes,' said Mr. Roker, shaking his head slowly from side to side, and gazing abstractedly out of the grated window before him, as if he were fondly recalling some peaceful scene of his early youth, 'it seems but

yesterday that he whopped the coal-heaver down at the Fox-under-the-Hill, by the wharf there. I think I can see him now, a coming up the Strand between the two street-keepers, a little sobered by the bruising, with a patch o' winegar and brown paper over his right eyelid, and that 'ere lovely bull-dog, as pinned the little boy arterwards, a following at his heels. What a rum thing time is, ain't it, Neddy ?'

Here we find, truthfully represented, an essential mood of the human mind. It is a more pleasing picture, perhaps, that comes back upon us in startling freshness, making us wonder if it is really so long ago since then, and our sentiment with regard to time is more elegantly expressed ; but it really comes to this. You can say no more of time than that it is a strange, undefinable, inexplicable thing ; and when, by some caprice of memory, some long departed scene comes vividly back, what more definite thing can you do than just shake your head, and gaze abstractedly, like Mr. Roker ? Like distant bells upon the breeze, some breath from childhood shows us plainly for a moment the little thing that was ourself. What more can you do but look at the picture, and feel that it is strange ? More important things have been forgotten ; but you remember how, when you were four years old, you ran a race along a path with a green slope beside it, and watched the small shadow keeping pace with you along the green slope ; or you recal the precise feeling with which you sat down in the railway carriage on the day when you first came home from school

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for the holidays, and felt the train glide away. And when these things return, what can you do but lean your head upon your hand, and vaguely muse and feel? I have always much admired the truthful account of the small boy's fancies, as he sits and gazes into the glowing fire 'with his wee round face.' Mr. Ballantine is a true philosopher as well as a true poet.

For a' sae sage he looks, what can the laddie ken?  
He's THINKIN' UPON NAETHING, like mony mighty men!

We can all 'think of naething,' and think of it for a long time, while yet the mind is by no means a blank.

• It is very easy, in one sense, to Grow Old. You have but to sit still and do nothing, and Time passing over you will make you old. But to Grow Old wisely and genially, is one of the most difficult tasks to which a human being can ever set himself. It is very hard to make up your mind to it. Some men grow old, struggling and recalcitrating, dragged along against their will, clinging to each birthday as a drowning man catches at an overhanging bough. Some folk grow old, gracefully and fittingly. I think that, as a general rule, the people who least reluctantly grow old, are worthy men and women, who see their children growing up into all that is good and admirable, with equal steps to those by

which they feel themselves to be growing downward. A better, nobler, and happier self, they think, will take their place ; and in all the success, honour, and happiness of that new self, they can feel a purer and worthier pride than they ever felt in their own. But the human being who has no one to represent him when he is gone, will naturally wish to put off the time of his going as long as may be. It seems to be a difficult thing to hit the medium between clinging foolishly to youth and making an affected parade of age. Entire naturalness upon this subject appears to be very hard of attainment. You know how many people, men as well as women, pretend to be younger than they really are. I have found various motives lead to this pretence. I have known men, distinguished at a tolerably early age in some walk of intellectual exertion, who in announcing their age (which they frequently did without any necessity), were wont to deduct three or five years from the actual tale, plainly with the intention of making their talent and skill more remarkable, by adding the element of these being developed at a wonderfully early stage of life. They wished to be recognised as infant phenomena. To be an eloquent preacher is always an excellent thing ; but how much more wonderful if the preacher be no more than twenty-two or twenty-three. To repeat *The Battle of Hohenlinden* is a worthy achievement ; but the foolish parent pats his child's head with special exultation,



as he tells you that his child, who has just repeated that popular poem, is no more than two years old. It is not improbable that the child's real age is two years and eleven months. It is very likely that the preacher's real age is twenty-eight. I remember hearing of a certain clerical person who, presuming on a very youthful aspect, gave himself out as twenty-four, when in fact he was thirty. I happened accidentally to see the register of that individual's baptism, which took place five years before the period at which he said he was born. The fact of this document's existence was made known to the man, by way of correcting his singular mistake. He saw it; but he clung to the fond delusion; and a year or two afterwards I read with much amusement in a newspaper some account of a speech made by him, into which account was incorporated an assurance that the speech was the more remarkable, inasmuch as the youthful orator was no more than twenty-four! Very, very contemptible, you say; and I entirely agree with you. And apart from the dishonesty, I do not think that judicious people will value very highly the crude fruit which has been forced to a certain ripeness before its time. Let us have the mature thing. Give us intellectual beef, rather than intellectual veal. In the domain of poetry, great things have occasionally been done at a very early age; for you do not insist upon sound and judicious views of life in poetry. For plain

sense and practical guidance, you go elsewhere. But in every other department of literature, the value of a production is in direct proportion to the amount of the experience which it embodies. A man can speak with authority only of that which he has himself felt and known. A man cannot paint portraits till he has seen faces. And all feeling, and most moods of mind, will be very poorly described by one who takes his notion of them at second-hand. When you are very young yourself, you may read with sympathy the writings of very young men ; but when you have reached maturity, and learned by experience the details and realities of life, you will be conscious of a certain indefinable want in such writings. And I do not know that this defect can be described more definitely than by saying that the entire thing is veal, not beef. You have the immature animal. You have the 'berries harsh and crude.'

But long after the period at which it is possible to assume the position of the infant phenomenon, you still find many men anxious to represent themselves as a good deal younger than they are. To the population of Britain generally, ten years elapse before one census is followed by the next ; but some persons, in these ten years, grow no more than two or three years older. Let me confess to an extreme abhorrence of such men. Their conduct affects me with an indescribable disgust. I dislike it more than many things which in themselves are probably

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more evil morally. Such men are, in the essential meaning of the word, *humbugs*. They are shams ; impostures ; false pretences. They are an embodied falsehood ; their very personality is a lie ; and you don't know what about them may next prove to be a deception. Looking at a man who says he is forty-three when in fact he is above sixty, I suspect him all over. I am in doubt whether his hair, his teeth, his eyes, are real. I do not know whether that breadth of chest be the development of manly bone and muscle, or the skilful padding of the tailor. I am not sure how much is the man, and how much the work of his valet. I suspect that his whiskers and moustache are dyed. I look at his tight boots, and think how they must be tormenting his poor old corny feet. I admire his affected buoyancy of manner, and think how the miserable creature must collapse when he finds himself alone, and is no longer compelled by the presence of company to put himself on the stretch, and carry on that wretched acting. When I see the old reptile whispering in a corner to a girl of eighteen, or furtively squeezing her in a waltz, I should like extremely to take him by the neck and shake him till he came into the pieces of which he is made up. And when I have heard (long ago) such a one, with a hideous gloating relish, telling a profane or indecent story ; or instilling cynical and impious notions of life and things into the minds of young lads ; or (more disgusting still) using

phrases of double meaning in the presence of innocent young women, and enjoying their innocent ignorance of his sense ; I have thought that I was beholding as degraded a phase of human nature as you will find on the face of this sinful world. Oh venerable age ; gray, wise, kindly sympathetic ; before which I shall never cease reverently to bend, respecting even what I may (wrongly perhaps) esteem your prejudices ; that *you* should be caricatured and degraded in that foul old leering satyr ! And if there be a thing on earth that disgusts one more than even the thought of the animal himself, it is to think of ministers of religion (prudently pious) who will wait meekly in his antechamber and sit humbly at his table, because he is an earl or a duke !

But though all this be so, there is a sense in which I interpret the clinging to youth, in which there is nothing contemptible about it, but much that is touching and pleasing. I abominate the padded, rouged, dyed old sham ; but I heartily respect the man or woman, pensive and sad, as some little circumstance has impressed upon them the fact that they are growing old. A man or woman is a fool, who is indignant at being called *the old lady* or *the old gentleman* when these phrases state the truth ; but there is nothing foolish or unworthy when some such occurrence brings it home to us, with something of a shock, that we are no

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longer reckoned among the young, and that the innocent and impressionable days of childhood (so well remembered) are beginning to be far away. We are drawing nearer, we know, to certain solemn realities, of which we speak much and feel little; the undiscovered country (humbly sought through the pilgrimage of life) is looming in the distance before. We feel that life is not long, and is not commonplace, when it is regarded as the portal to eternity. And probably nothing will bring back the season of infancy and early youth upon any thoughtful man's mind so vividly as the sense that he is growing old. How short a time since then! You look at your great brown hand. It seems like yesterday since a boy-companion (gray now) tried to print your name upon the little paw, and there was not room. You remember it (is it five-and-twenty years since?) as it looked when laid on the head of a friendly dog, two or three days before you found him poisoned and dead; and helped, not without tears, to bury him in the garden under an apple-tree. You see, as plainly as if you saw it now, his brown eye, as it looked at you in life for the last time. And as you feel these things, you quite unaffectedly and sincerely put off, time after time, the period at which you will accept it as a fact, that you are old. Twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-five, forty-eight, mark years on reaching which you will still feel yourself young; many men honestly think that

sixty-five or sixty-eight is the prime of life. A less amiable accompaniment of this pleasing belief is often found in a disposition to call younger men (and not very young) *boys*. I have heard that word uttered in a very spiteful tone, as though it were a name of great reproach. There are few epithets which I have ever heard applied in a manner betokening greater bitterness, than that of *a clever lad*. You remember how Sir Robert Walpole hurled the charge of youth against Pitt. You remember how Pitt (or Dr. Johnson for him) defended himself with great force of argument against the imputation. Possibly in some cases envy is at the root of the matter. Not every man has the magnanimity of Sir Bulwer Lytton, who tells us so frankly and so often how much he would like to be young again if he could.

To grow old is so serious a matter, that it always appears to me as if there was something like profanation in putting the fact or its attendant circumstances in a ludicrous manner. It is not a fit thing to joke about. A funny man might write a comic description of the way in which starving sailors on a raft used up their last poor allotments of bread and water, and watched with sinking hearts their poor stock decrease. Or he might record in a fashion that some people would laugh at, the gradual sinking of a family which had lost its means through degree after degree in the social scale, till the workhouse was reached at last. But

I do not think that there is anything really amusing in the spectacle of a human being giving up hold after hold to which he had clung, and sinking always lower and lower ; and there is no doubt, that in a physical sense, we soon come to do all that in the process of growing old. And though you may put each little mortification, each petty coming down, in a way amusing to bystanders, it should always be remembered that each may imply a severe pang on the part of the man himself. We smile when Mr. Dickens tells us concerning his hero, Mr. Tupman, that

Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form ; the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed ; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision ; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of the white cravat : but the soul of Tupman had known no change.

Now, although Mr. Tupman was an exceedingly fat man physically, and morally (to say the truth) a very great fool, you may rely upon it that as each little circumstance had occurred which his biographer has recorded, it would be a very serious circumstance in the feeling of poor Tupman himself. And this not nearly so much for the little personal mortification implied in each step of expanding bulk and lessening agility, but because each would be felt as a milestone, marking the progress of Tupman from his cradle to his grave. Each would be something to signify that the innocence and freshness of child-

hood were left so much farther behind, and that the reality of life was growing more hard and prosaic. It is some feeling like this which makes it a sad thing to lay aside an old coat which one has worn for a long time. It is a decided step. Of course we all know that time goes on as fast when its progress is unmarked as when it is noted. And each day that the coat went on was an onward stage as truly as the day when the coat went off; but in this world we must take things as they are to our feeling: and there is something that very strongly appeals to our feeling in a decided beginning or a decided ending. Do not laugh, thoughtless folk, at the poor old maid who persists in going bareheaded long after she ought to have taken to caps. You cannot know how much farther away that change would make her days of childhood seem: how much more remote and dim and faint it would make the little life, the face, the voice of the young brother or sister that died when they both were children together. Do not fancy that it is mere personal vanity which prompts that clinging to apparent youth: feelings which are gentle, pure, and estimable may protest against any change from the old familiar way. Do not smile at the phrases of the house when there are gray-headed *boys*, and *girls* on the lower side of forty-five: it would be a terrible sacrifice, it would make a terrible change, to give up the old names. You thoughtless young people are ready to deride





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Mr. Smith when he appears in his new wig. You do not think how, when poor Smith went to Truefitt's to get it, he thought many thoughts of the long-departed mother, whom he remembers dimly on her sick-bed smoothing down her little boy's hair, thick enough then. And when you see Mr. Robinson puffing up the hill with purple face and labouring breath, do you think that poor Robinson does not remember the days when he was the best runner at school? Perhaps he tells you at considerable length about those days. Well, listen patiently: some day you may be telling long stories too. There is a peculiar sadness in thinking of exertions of body or mind to which we were once equal, but to which we are not equal now. You remember the not very earnest Swift, conscious that the 'decay at the top' had begun, bursting into tears as he read one of his early works, and exclaiming, 'Heavens, what a genius I had when I wrote that!' What is there more touching than the picture of poor Sir Walter, wheeled like a child in a chair through the rooms at Abbotsford, and suddenly exclaiming, 'Come, this is sad idleness,' and insisting on beginning to dictate a new tale, in which the failing powers of the great magician appeared so sadly, that large as its marketable value would have been, it never was suffered to appear in print? Probably the sense of enfeebled faculties is a sadder thing than the sense of diminished physical power. Probably Sir Isaac Newton,

in his latter days, when he sat down to his own mathematical demonstrations, and could not understand them or follow them, felt more bitterly the wear of advancing time than the gray-headed Highlander sitting on a stone at his cottage door in the sunshine, and telling you how, long ago, he could breast the mountain with the speed of a deer : or than the crippled soldier, who leans upon his crutch, and tells how, many years ago, that shaky old hand cut down the French cuirassier. But in either case it is a sad thing to think of exertions once put forth, and work once done, which could not be done or put forth now. Change for the worse is always a sorrowful thing. And the aged man, in the respect of physical power, and the capacity for intellectual exertion, has 'seen better days.' You do not like to think that in any respect you are falling off. You are not pleased at being told that ten years ago you wrote a plainer hand or spoke in a rounder voice. It is mortifying to find that whereas you could once walk at five miles an hour, you can now accomplish no more than three and a half. Now, in a hundred ways, at every turn, and by a host of little wounding facts, we are compelled to feel as we grow old that we are falling off. As the complexion roughens, as the hair thins off, as we come to stoop, as we blow tremendously if we attempt to run, the man of no more than middle age is conscious of a bodily decadence. And advancing years make the wise man sadly

conscious of a mental decadence too. Let us be thankful that if physical and intellectual decline must come at a certain stage of growing old, there are respects in which, so long as we live, we may have the comfort of thinking that we are growing better. The higher nature may daily be reaching a nobler development ; when ‘ heart and flesh faint and fail,’ when the clay tenement is turning frail and shattered, the better part within may show in all moral grace as but a little lower than the angels. Age need not necessarily be ‘ dark and unlovely,’ as Ossian says it is ; and the conviction that in some respect, that in the most important of all respects, we are growing better, tends mightily to strip age of that sense of falling off which is the bitterest thing about it. And as the essential nature of growing old ;—its essence is a sad thing ;—lies in the sense of decadence, the conviction that in almost anything we are gaining ground has a wonderful power to enable us cheerfully to grow old. A man will contentedly grow fatter, balder, and puffier, if he feels assured that he is pushing on to eminence at the bar or in politics : and if he takes his seat upon the woolsack even at the age of seventy-five, though he might now seek in vain to climb the trees he climbed in youth, or to play at leapfrog as then, still he is conscious that his life on the whole has been a progress ; that he is on the whole better now than he was in those days which were his best days physically ; that to be Lord Chancellor, albeit a

venerable one, is, as the world goes, a more eminent thing than to be the gayest and most active of midshipmen. And so on the whole he is content to grow old, because he feels that in growing old he has not on the whole been coming down hill.

The supremely mortifying thing is, to feel that the physical decadence which comes with growing old, is not counterbalanced by any improvement whatsoever. We shall not mind much about growing less agile and less beautiful, if we think that we are growing wiser and better. The gouty but wealthy merchant, who hobbles with difficulty to his carriage, feels that after all he has made an advance upon those days in which, if free from gout, he was devoid of pence ; and if he did not hobble, he had no carriage into which he might get in that awkward manner. The gray-haired old lady who was a beauty once, is consoled for her growing old, if in her age she is admitted to the society of the county, while in her youth she was confined to the society of the town. Make us feel that we are better in something, and we shall be content to be worse in many things ; but it is miserable to think that in all things we are falling off, or even in all things standing still. A man would be very much mortified to think that at fifty he did not write materially better sermons, essays, or articles than he did at five-and-twenty. In many things he knows the autumn of life is a falling off from its spring-time. He has ceased to

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dance : his voice quavers abominably when he tries to sing ; he has no fancy now for climbing hills, and he shirks walks of forty miles a day. Perhaps deeper wrinkles have been traced by time on the heart than on the forehead, and the early freshness of feeling is gone. But surely in mellowed experience, in sober and sound views of things, in tempered expectations, in patience, in sympathy, in kindly charity, in insight into God's ways and dealings, he is better now a thousand times than he was then. He has worked his way through the hectic stage in which even able and thoughtful men fancy that Byron was a great poet. A sounder judgment and a severer taste direct him now ; in all things, in short, that make the essence of the manly nature, he is a better and farther advanced man than he ever was before. The physical nature says, by many little signs, *WE ARE GOING DOWN HILL* ; the spiritual nature testifies, by many noble gains and acquirements, *WE ARE GOING ONWARD AND UPWARD* ! It seems to me that the clergyman's state of feeling must be a curious one, who, on a fine Sunday morning, when he is sixty, can take out of his drawer a sermon which he wrote at five-and-twenty, and go and preach it with perfect approval and without the alteration of a word. It is somewhat mortifying, no doubt, to look at a sermon which you wrote seven or eight years since, and which you then thought brilliant eloquence, and to find that in your present judgment it is no better than tawdry fustian. But

still, my friend, even though you grudge to find that you must throw the sermon aside and preach it no more, are you not secretly pleased at this proof how much your mind has grown in these years? It is pleasant to think that you have not been falling off, not standing still. The wings of your imagination are somewhat clipped indeed, and your style has lost something of that pith which goes with want of consideration. Some youthful judges may think that you have sadly fallen off; but you are content in the firm conviction that you have vastly improved. It was veal then: it is beef now. I remember hearing with great interest how a venerable professor of fourscore wrote in the last few weeks of his life a little course of lectures on a certain debated point of theology. He had outgrown his former notions upon the subject. The old man said his former lectures upon it did not do him justice. Was it not a pleasant sight—the aged tree bearing fruit to the last? How it must have pleased and soothed the good man, amid many advancing infirmities, to persuade himself (justly or unjustly), that in the most important respect he was going onward still!

It is indeed a pleasant sight to kindly on-lookers, and it is a sustaining and consoling thing to the old man himself, when amid physical decadence there is intellectual growth. But this is not a common thing. As a general rule, it cannot be doubted that, intellectually, we top the summit sometime before fourscore, and begin to go down hill. I do

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not wish to turn my essays into sermons ; or to push upon my readers things more fitly addressed to my congregation on Sundays : still, let me say that in the thought that Growing Old implies at last a decay both mental and bodily, and that unrelieved Going Down is a very sad thing to feel to see, I find great comfort in remembering that as regards the best and noblest of all characteristics, the old man may be progressing to the last. In all the beautiful qualities which most attract the love and reverence of those around, and which fit for purer and happier company than can be found in this world, the aged man or woman may be growing still. In the last days, indeed, it may be ripening rather than growing : mellowing, not expanding. But to do *that* is to ‘grow in grace.’ And doubtless the yellow harvest-field in September is an advance upon the fresh green blades of June. You may like better to look upon the wheat that is progressing towards ripeness ; but the wheat which has reached ripeness is not a falling off. The stalks will not bend now, without breaking : you rub the heads, and the yellow chaff that wraps the grain, crumbles off in dust. But it is beyond a question that there you see wheat at its best.

Still, not forgetting this, we must all feel it sad to see human beings as they grow old, retrograding in material comforts and advantages. It is a

mournful thing to see : a man growing poorer as he is growing older, or losing position in any way. If it were in my power, I would make all barristers above sixty judges. They ought to be put in a situation of dignity and independence. You don't like to go into a court of justice, and there behold a thin, gray-headed counsel, somewhat shaken in nerve, looking rather frail, battling away with a full-blooded, confident, hopeful, impudent fellow, five-and-twenty years his junior. The youthful, big-whiskered, roaring, and bullying advocate is sure to be held in much the greater estimation by attorneys' clerks. The old gentleman's day is over; but with lessening practice and disappointed hopes he must drive on at the bar still. I wish I were a Chief Justice, that by special deference and kindness of manner, I might daily soothe somewhat the feelings of that aging man. But it is especially in the case of the clergy that one sees the painful sight of men growing poorer as they are growing older. I think of the case of a clergyman who at his first start was rather fortunate : who gets a nice parish at six-and-twenty : I mean a parish which is a nice one for a man of six-and-twenty : and who never gets any other preferment, but in that parish grows old.\* Don't we all know how pretty and elegant everything was about him at first : how trim and weedless were his garden and shrubbery : how rosy his carpets, how airy his window-curtains, how neat



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though slight all his furniture : how graceful, merry, and nicely-dressed the young girl who was his wife : how (besides hosts of parochial improvements) he devised numberless little changes about his dwelling : rustic bowers, moss-houses, green mounts, labyrinthine walks, fantastically-trimmed yews, root-bridges over the little stream ? But as his family increased, his income stood still. It was hard enough work to make the ends meet even at first, though young hearts are hopeful : but with six or seven children, with boys who must be sent to college, with girls who must be educated as ladies, with the prices of all things ever increasing, with multiplying bills from the shoemaker, tailor, dress-maker ; the poor parson grows yearly poorer. The rosy face of the young wife has now deep lines of care : the weekly sermon is dull and spiritless : the parcel of books comes no more : the carpets grow threadbare but are not replaced : the furniture becomes creaky and rickety : the garden walks are weedy : the bark peels off the rustic verandah : the moss-house falls much over to one side : the friends, far away, grow out of all acquaintance. The parson himself, once so precise in dress, is shabby and untidy now ; and his wife's neat figure is gone : the servants are of inferior class, coarse and insolent : perhaps the burden of hopeless debt presses always with its dull dead weight upon the poor clergyman's heart. There is little spring in him to push off the

invasion of fatigue and infection, and he is much exposed to both; and should he be taken away, who shall care for the widow and the fatherless, losing at once their head, their home, their means of living? Even you, non-clerical reader, know precisely what I describe: hundreds have seen it: and such will agree with me when I say that there is no sadder sight than that of a clergyman, with a wife and children, growing poor as he is growing old. Oh that I had the fortune of John Jacob Astor, that I might found, once for all, a fund that should raise for ever above penury and degradation the widows and the orphans of rectory, vicarage, parsonage, and manse!

And even when the old man has none depending upon him for bread, to be provided from his lessening store, there is something inexpressibly touching and mournful in the spectacle of an old man who must pinch and screw. You do not mind a bit about a hopeful young lad having to live in humble lodgings up three pair of stairs; or about such a one having a limited number of shirts, stockings, and boots, and needing to be very careful and saving as to his clothes; or about his having very homely shaving-things, or hair-brushes which are a good deal worn out. The young fellow can stand all that: it is all quite right: let him bear the yoke in his youth: he may look forward to better days. Nor does there seem in the nature of things any

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very sad inconsistency in the idea of a young lad carefully considering how long his boots or great coat will last, or with what *minimum* of shirts he can manage to get on. But I cannot bear the thought of a gray-headed old man, with shaky hand and weary limb, sitting down in his lonely lodging, and meditating on such things as these : counting his pocket-handkerchiefs, and suspecting that one is stolen ; or looking ruefully at a boot which has been cut where the upper leather joins the sole. Let not the aged man be worried with such petty details ! Of course, my reader, I know as well as you do, that very many aged people must think of these little things to the last. All I say is, that if I had the ordering of things, no man or woman above fifty should ever know the want of money. And whenever I find a four-leaved shamrock, *that* is the very first arrangement I shall make. Possibly I may extend the arrangement further, and provide that no honest married man or woman shall ever grow early old through wearing care. What a little end is sometimes the grand object of a human being's strivings through many weeks and months ! I sat down the other day in a poor chamber, damp with much linen drying upon crossing lines. There dwells a solitary woman, an aged and infirm woman, who supports herself by washing. For months past her earnings have averaged three shillings a-week. Out of that sum she must provide food and raiment ;

she must keep in her poor fire ; and she must pay a rent of nearly three pounds a-year. ‘It is hard work, sir,’ she said : ‘it costs me many a thought getting together the money to pay my rent.’ And I could see well, that from the year’s beginning to its end, the thing always uppermost in that poor old widow’s waking thoughts, was the raising of that great incubus of a sum of money. A small end, you would say, for the chief thoughts of an immortal being ! Don’t you feel, gay young reader, for that fellow-creature, to whom a week has been a success, if at its close she can put by a few halfpence towards meeting the term-day ? Would you not like to enrich her, to give her a light heart, by sending her a half-sovereign ? If you would, you may send it to me.\*

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It is well, I have said, for a man who is growing old, if he is able to persuade himself that though physically going downhill, he is yet in some respect progressing. For if he can persuade himself that he is progressing in any one thing, he will certainly believe that he is advancing on the whole. Still, it must be said, that the self-complacency of old gen-

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\* I cannot deny myself the pleasure of recording that for many days after the above paragraph was first published (in *Fraser’s Magazine* for June, 1860), there arrived by each morning’s post little sums sent by all kinds of people, in distant parts of Britain ; which made the poor widow quite rich.

tlemen is sometimes amusing (where not irritating) to their juniors. The self-conceit of many old men is something quite amazing. They talk incessantly about themselves and their doings; and, to hear them talk, you would imagine that every great social or political change of late years had been brought about mainly by their instrumentality. I have heard an elderly man of fair average ability, declare in sober earnest, that had he gone to the bar, he 'had no hesitation in saying' that he would have been Chancellor or Chief Justice of England. I have witnessed an elderly man whom the late Sir Robert Peel never saw or heard of, declare that Sir Robert had borrowed from him his idea of abolishing the Corn-laws. I have heard an elderly mercantile man, who had gone the previous day to look at a small property which was for sale, remark that he had no doubt that by this time all the county was aware of what he had been doing. With the majority of elderly men, you can hardly err on the side of over-estimating the amount of their vanity. They will receive with satisfaction a degree of flattery which would at once lead a young man to suspect that you were making a fool of him. There is no doubt that if a man be foolish at all, he always grows more foolish as he grows older. The most outrageous conceit of personal beauty, intellectual prowess, weight in the county, superiority in the regard of horses, wine,

pictures, grapes, potatoes, poultry, pigs, and all other possessions, which I have ever seen, has been in the case of old men. And I have known commonplace old women, to whom if you had ascribed queenly beauty and the intellect of Shakspeare, they would have thought you were doing them simple justice. The truth appears to be, not that the vanity of elderly folk is naturally bigger than that of their juniors, but that it is not mown down in that unsparing fashion to which the vanity of their juniors is subjected. If an old man tells you that the abolition of the Slave-trade originated in his back-parlour, you may think him a vain, silly old fellow, but you do not tell him so. Whereas if a young person makes an exhibition of personal vanity, he is severely ridiculed. He is taught sharply that, however great may be his estimate of himself, it will not do to show it. 'Shut up, old fellow, and don't make a fool of yourself,' you say to a friend of your own age, should he begin to vapour. But when the aged pilgrim begins to boast, you feel bound to listen with apparent respect. And the result is, that the old gentleman fancies you believe all he tells you.

Not unfrequently, when a man has grown old to that degree that all his powers of mind and body are considerably impaired, there is a curious and touching mood which comes before an almost sudden

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breaking-down into decrepitude. It is a mood in which the man becomes convinced that he is not so very old ; that he has been mistaken in fancying that the autumn of life was so far advanced with him ; and that all he has to do in order to be as active and vigorous as he ever was, is to make some great change of scene and circumstances : to go back, perhaps, to some place where he had lived many years before, and there, as Dr. Johnson expresses it, to ‘recover youth in the fields where he once was young.’ The aged clergyman thinks that if he were now to go to the parish he was offered forty years since, it would bring back those days again : he would be the man he was then. Of course, in most cases, such a feeling is like the leaping up of the flame before it goes out ; it is an impulse as natural and as unreasonable as that which makes the dying man insist within an hour of his death on being lifted from his bed and placed in his easy chair, and then he will be all right. But sometimes there really is in human feeling and life something analogous to the Martinmas summer in the year. Sometimes after we had made up our mind that we had grown old, it flashes upon us that we are not so old after all : there is a real rejuvenescence. Happy days promote the feeling. You know that as autumn draws on, there come days on which it is summer or winter just as the weather chances to be fair or foul. And so there is a stage of life in which

it depends mainly on a man's surroundings whether he shall be old or young. If unsuccessful, overburdened, overdriven, lightly esteemed, with much depending upon him, and little aid or sympathy, a man may feel old at thirty-five. But if there still be a house where he is one of *the boys* : if he be living among his kindred and those who have grown up along with him : if he be still unmarried : if he have not lived in many different places, or in any place very far away : if he have not known many different modes of life, or worked in many different kinds of work : then at thirty-five he may feel very young. There are men who at that age have never known what it is to stand upon their own legs in life, and to act upon their own responsibility. They have always had some one to tell them what to do. I can imagine that towards the close of the ten years which Pisistratus Caxton spent in Australia, far away from his parents and his home, and day by day obliged to decide and manage for himself, he had begun to feel tolerably old. But when he came back again, and found his father and mother hardly changed in aspect ; and found the chairs, and sofas, and beds, and possibly even the carpets, looking much as he had left them ; those ten years, a vast expanse while they were passing over, would close up into something very small in the perspective ; and he would feel with a sudden exultation that he was quite a young fellow yet.



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It is wonderful what a vast amount of work a man may go through without its telling much upon him : and how many years he may live without feeling perceptibly older at their close. The years were long in passing ; they look like nothing when past. If you were to go away, my friend, from London or Edinburgh, and live for five or six years in the centre of the Libyan desert ; or in an island of the South Seas ; or at an up-country station in India ; there would be many evenings in those years on which you would feel as though you were separated by ages from the scenes and friends you knew. It would seem like a century since you came away : it would seem like an impossibility that you should ever be back again in the old place, looking and feeling much in the old way. But at length, travelling on week after week, you come home again. You find your old companions looking just as before, and the places you knew are little changed. Miss Smith, whom you remember a blooming young woman before you went out, is a blooming young woman still, and probably singing the same songs which you remember her singing then. Why, it rushes upon you, you have been a very short time away ! you are not a day older ; it is a mere nothing to go out sperm-whaling for four or five years, or to retire for that period to a parish in the *Ultima Thule*. Life, after all, is so long, that you may cut a good large

slice out of the earlier years of it without making it perceptibly less. When Macaulay returned from India after his years there, I have no doubt he felt this. And the general principle is true, that almost any outward condition or any state of feeling, after it has passed away, appears to us to have lasted a very much shorter time than it did when it was passing: and it leaves us with the conviction that we are not nearly so old as we had fancied while it was passing. And the rejuvenescence is sometimes not merely in feeling, but in fact and in appearance. Have you not known a lady of perhaps three-and-thirty years married to an ugly old foggy of eighty-five, who, during the old foggy's life, wore high dresses and caps, that she might appear something like a suitable match for the old foggy; but who, instantly the ancient buffalo departed this life, cast aside her venerable trappings, and burst upon the world almost as a blooming girl, doubtless to her own astonishment no less than to that of her friends? And you remember that pleasing touch of nature in the new series of *Friends in Council*, when Milverton, after having talked of himself as a faded widower, and appeared before us as one devoted to grave philosophic research, falls in love with a girl of two-and-twenty, and discovers that after all he is not so old. And I suppose it would be a pleasant discovery to any man, after he had fancied for years that the

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romantic interest had for him fled from life, to find that music could still thrill through him as of yore, and that the capacity of spooniness was not at all obliterated. As Festus says—

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Rouse thee, heart!

Bow of my life, thou yet art full of spring!

My quiver still hath many purposes.

When Sir Philip Sydney tells us that in walking through the fields of his Arcadia, you would, among other pleasant sights and sounds, here and there chance upon a shepherd boy, 'piping as if he would never grow old,' you find the chivalrous knight giving his countenance to the vulgar impression that youth is a finer thing than age. And you may find among the *Twice-told Tales* of Nathaniel Hawthorne a most exquisite one called *The Fountain of Youth*, in which we are told of three old gentlemen and an old lady, who were so enchanted by tasting a draught which brought back the exhilaration of youth for half-an-hour (though it led them likewise to make very great fools of themselves), that they determined they would wander over the world till they should find that wondrous fountain, and then quaff its waters morning, noon, and night. And Thomas Moore, in one of his sweetest songs, warms for a minute from cold glitter into earnestness, as he declares his belief that no gains which advancing years can bring with them are any compensation for the lightheartedness and the passionate excitement which they take away.

He says—

Ne'er tell me of glories serenely adorning

The close of our day, the calm eve of our night :

Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning,—

Its smiles and its tears are worth evening's best light.

And indeed it is to be admitted that in a life whose poetry is drawn from the domain of passion and imagination, the poetry does pass away as imagination flags and the capacity of emotion dries up with advancing time. But the true philosopher among the three writers who have been mentioned, is Mr. Hawthorne. *He* shows us how the exhilaration, the *wild freshness* of the season when life is at blood-heat, partakes of the nature of intoxication ; and he leaves us with the sober conviction that the truly wise man may well be thankful when he has got safely through that feverish season of temptation and of folly. Let us be glad if our bark has come (even a little battered) through the Maelstrom, by the Scylla and Charybdis, and is now sailing quietly upon a calm and tranquil sea. Wait till you are a little older, youthful reader, and you will understand that truth and soberness (how fitly linked together) are noble things. If you are a good man—let me say it at once, a Christian man—your latter days are better a thousand times than those early ones after which superficial and worldly folk whimper. The capacity of excitement is much lessened ; the freshness of feeling and heart is much gone ; though

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not, of necessity, so very much. You begin, like the old grandmother in that beautiful poem of Mr. Tennyson, 'to be a little weary;' the morning air is hardly so exhilarating, nor the frosty winter afternoon; the snowdrops and primroses come back, and you are disappointed that so little of the vernal joy comes with them; you go and stand by the grave of your young sister on the anniversary of the day when she died, and you wonder that you have come to *feel* so little where once you felt so much. You preach the sermons you once preached with emotion so deep that it was contagious; but now the corresponding feeling does not come; you give them coldly; you are mortified at the contrast between the warmth there is in the old words, and the chilliness with which you speak them. You hear of the death of a dear friend, and you are vexed that you can take it so coolly. But oh! my brother, aging like myself, do you not know, in sober earnest, that for such losses as these, other things have brought abundant recompense? What a meaning there is now to you in the words of St. Austin—'Thou madst us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee!' You are beginning to understand that St. Paul was right, when (even in the face of the fact that inexperienced youth is proverbially the most hopeful) he declared that in the truest sense 'experience worketh hope.' What a calm there is here! Passion is no longer the disturbing force it

once was. Your eyes are no longer blinded to the truth of things by the glittering mists of fancy. You do your duty quietly and hopefully. You can bear patiently with the follies and the expectations of youth. I say it with the firmest assurance of the truth of what I say, that as he grows old, the wise man has great reason to thank God that he is no longer young. Truth and soberness are well worth all they cost. You won't make a terrific fool of yourself any more. Campbell was not a philosopher, and possibly he was only half in earnest when he wrote the following verse ; but many men, no longer young, will know how true it is :—

Hail, welcome tide of life, where no tumultuous billows roll,  
How wondrous to myself appears this halcyon calm of soul !  
The wearied bird blown o'er the deep would sooner quit its  
shore,  
Than I would cross the gulf again that Time has brought me  
o'er !

The dead are the only people that never grow old. There was something typical in the arrestment of time in the case of the youthful miner, of whom we have already spoken. Your little brother or sister that died long ago, remains in death and in remembrance the same young thing for ever. It is fourteen years this evening since the writer's sister left this world. She was fifteen years old then—she is fifteen years old yet. I have grown older since then by fourteen years, but she has never changed as they

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advanced ; and if God spares me to fourscore, I never shall think of her as other than the youthful creature she faded. The other day I listened as a poor woman told of the death of her first-born child. He was two years old. She had a small washing-green, across which was stretched a rope that came in the middle close to the ground. The boy was leaning on the rope, swinging backwards and forwards, and shouting with delight. The mother went into her cottage and lost sight of him for a minute ; and when she returned, the little man was lying across the rope, dead. It had got under his chin : he had not sense to push it away ; and he was suffocated. The mother told me, and I believe truly, that she had never been the same person since ; but the thing which mainly struck me was, that though it is eighteen years since then, she thought of her child as an infant of two years yet : it is a little child she looks for to meet her at the gate of the Golden City. Had her child lived he would have been twenty years old now : he died, and he is only two : he is two yet : he will never be more than two. The little rosy face of that morning, and the little half-articulate voice, would have been faintly remembered by the mother had they gradually died into boyhood and manhood ; but that day stereotyped them : they remain "unchanged."

Have you seen, my reader, the face that had

grown old in life grow young after death? The expression of many years since, lost for long, come out startlingly in the features, fixed and cold? Every one has seen it: and it is sometimes strange how rapidly the change takes place. The marks of pain fade out, and with them the marks of age. I once saw an aged lady die. She had borne sharp pain for many days with the endurance of a martyr; she had to bear sharp pain to the very last. The features were tense and rigid with suffering; they remained so while life remained. It was a beautiful sight to see the change that took place in the very instant of dissolution. The features, sharp for many days with pain, in that instant recovered the old aspect of quietude which they had borne in health: the tense, tight look was gone. You saw the signs of pain go out. You felt that all suffering was over. It was no more of course than the working of physical law: but in that case it seemed as if there was a farther meaning conveyed. It was hardly possible to look on the countenance, so suffering the one moment, so quiet and calm the next, without remembering words which tell us, concerning the country into which the Christian enters in the instant of his departure, that 'THERE shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; *neither shall there be any more pain.*' And so it seems to me when the young look comes back on the departed Christian's face. Gone, it seems to



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say, where the progress of time shall no longer bring age or decay. Gone where there are beings whose life may be reckoned by centuries, but in whom life is fresh and young, and always will be so. Close the aged eyes ! Fold the aged hands in rest. Their owner is no longer old !

## CHAPTER VII.

CONCERNING SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS ;

*With some Thoughts upon the Swing of the Pendulum.\**

‘I HAVE eaten up all the grounds of my tea,’ said, many years since, in my hearing, in modest yet triumphant tones, a little girl of seven years old. I have but to close my eyes, and I see all that scene again, almost as plainly as ever. Six or seven children (I am one of them) are sitting round a tea-table ; their father and mother are there too ; and an old gentleman, who is (in his own judgment) one of the wisest of men. I see the dining-room, large and low-ceilinged ;

\* For the suggestion of the subject of this essay, and for many valuable hints as to its treatment, I am indebted to the kindness of the Archbishop of Dublin. Indeed, in all that part of the essay which treats of *Secondary Vulgar Errors*, I have done little more than expand and illustrate the skeleton of thought supplied to me by Archbishop Whately.

the cheerful glow of the autumnal fire ; the little faces in the soft candle-light, for glaring gas was there unknown. There had been much talk about the sinfulness of waste—of the waste of even very little things. The old gentleman, so wise (in his own judgment, and indeed in my judgment at that period), was instilling into the children's minds some of those lessons which are often impressed upon children by people (I am now aware) of no great wisdom or cleverness. He had dwelt at considerable length upon the sinfulness of wasting anything ; likewise on the sinfulness of children being saucy or particular as to what they should eat. He enforced, with no small solemnity, the duty of children's eating what was set before them without minding whether it was good or not, or at least without minding whether they liked it or not. The poor little girl listened to all that was said, and of course received it all as indubitably true. Waste and sauciness, she saw, were wrong, so she judged that the very opposite of waste and sauciness must be right. Accordingly, she thought she would turn to use something that was very small, but still something that ought not to be wasted. Accordingly, she thought she would show the docility of her taste by eating up something that was very disagreeable. Here was an opportunity at once of acting out the great principles to which she had been listening. And while a boy, evidently destined to be a metaphysician, and evidently possessed

of the spirit of resistance to constituted authority whether in government or doctrine, boldly argued that it could not be wicked in him to hate onions, because God had made him so that he did hate onions, and (going still deeper into things) insisted that to eat a thing when you did not want it was wasting it much more truly than it would be wasting it to leave it; the little girl ate up all the grounds left in her teacup, and then announced the fact with considerable complacency.

Very, very natural. The little girl's act was a slight straw showing how a great current sets. It was a fair exemplification of a tendency which is woven into the make of our being. Tell the average mortal that it is wrong to walk on the left side of the road, and in nine cases out of ten he will conclude that the proper thing must be to walk on the right side of the road; whereas in actual life, and in almost all opinions, moral, political, and religious, the proper thing is to walk neither on the left nor the right side, but somewhere about the middle. Say to the ship-master, You are to sail through a perilous strait; you will have the raging Scylla on one hand as you go. His natural reply will be, Well, I will keep as far away from it as possible; I will keep close by the other side. But the rejoinder must be, No, you will be quite as ill off *there*; you will be in equal peril on the other side: *there* is Charybdis. What you have to do is to keep at a

safe distance from each. In avoiding the one, do not run into the other.

It seems to be a great law of the universe, that Wrong lies upon either side of the way, and that Right is the narrow path between. There are the two ways of doing wrong—Too Much and Too Little. Go to the extreme right hand and you are wrong ; go to the extreme left hand, and you are wrong too. That you may be right, you have to keep somewhere between these two extremes : but not necessarily in the exact middle. All this, of course, is part of the great fact that in this world Evil has the advantage of Good. It is easier to go wrong than right.

It is very natural to think that if one thing or course be wrong, its reverse must be right. If it be wrong to walk towards the east, surely it must be right to walk towards the west. If it be wrong to dress in black, it must be right to dress in white. It is somewhat hard to say, *Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt*—to declare, as if that were a statement of the whole truth, that *fools mistake reverse of wrong for right*. Fools do so indeed, but not fools only. The average human being, with the most honest intentions, is prone to mistake reverse of wrong for right. We are fond, by our natural constitution, of broad distinctions—of classifications that put the whole interests and objects of this world to the right-hand and to the left. We long for Aye or No—for Heads or Tails. We are impa-

tient of limitations, qualifications, restrictions. You remember how Mr. Micawber explained the philosophy of income and expenditure, and urged people never to run in debt. *Income*, said he, *a hundred pounds a year; expenditure ninety-nine pounds nineteen shillings: Happiness. Income, a hundred pounds a year; expenditure a hundred pounds and one shilling: Misery.* You see the principle involved is, that if you are not happy, you must be miserable—that if you are not miserable you must be happy. If you are not any particular thing, then you are its opposite. If you are not For, then you are Against. If you are not black, many men will jump to the conclusion that you are white: the fact probably being that you are gray. If not a Whig, you must be a Tory: in truth, you are a Liberal-Conservative. We desiderate in all things the sharp decidedness of the verdict of a jury—Guilty or Not Guilty. We like to conclude that if a man be not very good, then he is very bad; if not very clever, then very stupid; if not very wise, then a fool: whereas in fact, the man probably is a curious mixture of good and evil, strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, knowledge and ignorance, cleverness and stupidity.

Let it be here remarked, that in speaking of it as an error to take *reverse of wrong for right*, I use the words in their ordinary sense, as generally understood. In common language the *reverse* of a thing is taken to mean the thing at *the opposite end*

of the scale from it. Thus, black is the reverse of white, bigotry of latitudinarianism, malevolence of benevolence, parsimony of extravagance, and the like. Of course, in strictness, these things are not the *reverse* of one another. In strictness, the reverse of wrong always is right; for, to speak with severe precision, the reverse of *steering upon Scylla* is simply *not steering upon Scylla*; the reverse of *being extravagant* is not *being parsimonious* — it is simply *not being extravagant*; the reverse of *walking eastward* is not *walking westward* — it is simply *not walking eastward*. And *that* may include standing still, or walking to any point of the compass except the east. But I understand the *reverse of a thing* as meaning the *opposite extreme* from it. And you see, the Latin words quoted above are more precise than the English. It is severely true, that *while fools think to shun error on one side, they run into the contrary error*—i. e., the error that lies equidistant, or nearly equidistant, on the other side of the line of right.

One class of the errors into which men are prone to run under this natural impulse are those which have been termed *Secondary Vulgar Errors*. A *vulgar error* you will understand, my reader, does not by any means signify an error into which only the vulgar are likely to fall. It does not by any means signify a mistaken belief which will be taken up only by inferior and uneducated minds. A *vul-*

*gar error* means an error either in conduct or belief into which *man*, by the make of his being, is likely to fall. Now, people a degree wiser and more thoughtful than the mass, discover that these vulgar errors are errors. They conclude that their opposites (i. e., the things at the other extremity of the scale) must be right; and by running into the opposite extreme they run just as far wrong upon the other side. There is too great a reaction. The twig was bent to the right—they bend it to the left, forgetting that the right thing was that the twig should be straight. If convinced that waste and sauciness are wrong, they proceed to eat the grounds of their tea; if convinced that self-indulgence is wrong, they conclude that hair-shirts and midnight floggings are right; if convinced that the Church of Rome has too many ceremonies, they resolve that they will have no ceremonies at all; if convinced that it is unworthy to grovel in the presence of a duke, they conclude that it will be a fine thing to refuse the duke ordinary civility; if convinced that monarchs are not much wiser or better than other human beings, they run off into the belief that all kings have been little more than incarnate demons; if convinced that representative government often works very imperfectly, they raise a cry for imperialism; if convinced that monarchy has its abuses, they call out for republicanism; if convinced that Britain has many things which are not so good as



they ought to be, they keep constantly extolling the perfection of the United States.

Now, inasmuch as a rise of even one step in the scale of thought elevates the man who has taken it above the vast host of men who have never taken even that one step, the number of people who (at least in matters of any moment) arrive at the Secondary Vulgar Error is much less than the number of the people who stop at the Primary Vulgar Error. Very great multitudes of human beings think it a very fine thing, the very finest of all human things, to be very rich. A much smaller number, either from the exercise of their own reflective powers, or from the indoctrination of romantic novels and overdrawn religious books, run to the opposite extreme : undervalue wealth, deny that it adds anything to human comfort and enjoyment, declare that it is an unmixed evil, profess to despise it. I daresay that many readers of the *Idylls of the King* will so misunderstand that exquisite song of 'Fortune and her Wheel,' as to see in it only the charming and sublime embodiment of a secondary vulgar error—the error, to wit, that wealth and outward circumstances are of no consequence at all. To me that song appears rather to take the further step, and to reach the conclusion in which is embodied the deliberate wisdom of humankind upon this matter : the conclusion which shakes from itself on either hand either vulgar error : the idolization of wealth on the

one side, the contempt of it on the other : and to convey the sobered judgment that while the advantages and refinements of fortune are so great that no thoughtful man can long despise it, the responsibilities and temptations of it are so great that no thoughtful man will much repine if he fail to reach it ; and thus that we may genially acquiesce in that which it pleases God to send. Midway between two vulgar errors : steering a sure track between Scylla and Charybdis : the grovelling multitude to the left, the romantic few to the right ; stand the words of inspired wisdom. The pendulum had probably oscillated many times between the two errors, before it settled at the central truth : ‘ Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me : Lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.’

But although these errors of reaction are less common than the primary vulgar errors, they are better worth noticing : inasmuch as in many cases they are the errors of the well-intentioned. People fall into the primary vulgar errors without ever thinking of right or wrong : merely feeling an impulse to go there, or to think thus. But worthy folk, for the most part, fall into the secondary vulgar errors, while honestly endeavouring to escape what they have discerned to be wrong. Not indeed that it is always in good faith that men run to the opposite

extreme. Sometimes they do it in pet and perversity, being well aware that they are doing wrong. You hint to some young friend, to whom you are nearly enough related to be justified in doing so, that the dinner to which he has invited you, with several others, is unnecessarily fine, is somewhat extravagant, is beyond what he can afford. The young friend asks you back in a week or two, and sets before you a feast of salt herrings and potatoes. Now the fellow did not run into this extreme with the honest intention of doing right. He knew perfectly well that this was not what you meant. He did not go through this piece of folly in the sincere desire to avoid the other error of extravagance. Or, you are a country clergyman. You are annoyed, Sunday by Sunday, by a village lad who, from enthusiasm or ostentation, sings so loud in church as to disturb the whole congregation. You hint to him, as kindly as you can, that there is something very pleasing about the softer tones of his voice, and that you would like to hear them more frequently. But the lad sees through your civil way of putting the case. His vanity is touched. He sees you mean that you don't like to hear him bellow : and next Sunday you will observe that he shuts up his hymn-book in dudgeon, and will not sing at all. Leave the blockhead to himself. Do not set yourself to stroke down his self-conceit : he knows quite well he is doing wrong : there is neither sense nor honesty

in what he does. You remark at dinner, while staying with a silly old gentleman, that the plum-pudding, though admirable, perhaps errs on the side of over-richness ; next day he sets before you a mass of stiff paste with no plums at all, and says, with a look of sly stupidity, ‘ Well, I hope you are satisfied now.’ Politeness prevents your replying, ‘ No, you don’t. You know that is not what I meant. You are a fool.’ You remember the boy in *Pickwick*, who on his father finding fault with him for something wrong he had done, offered to kill himself if that would be any satisfaction to his parent. In this case you have a more recondite instance of this peculiar folly. Here the primary course is tacitly assumed, without being stated. The primary impulse of the human being is to take care of himself : the opposite of *that* of course is to kill himself. And the boy, being chidden for doing something which might rank under the general head of taking care of himself, proposed (as that course appeared to be unsatisfactory) to take the opposite one. ‘ You don’t take exercise enough,’ said a tutor to a wrong-headed boy who was under his care : ‘ you ought to walk more.’ Next morning the perverse fellow entered the breakfast parlour in a fagged condition, and said, with the air of a martyr, ‘ Well, I trust I have taken exercise enough to-day : I have walked twenty miles this morning.’ As for all such manifestations of the disposition to run into opposite

extremes, let them be treated as manifestations of pettedness, perversity, and dishonesty. In some cases a high-spirited youth may be excused them ; but, for the most part, they come with doggedness, wrong-headedness, and dense stupidity. And any pretext that they are exhibited with an honest intention to do right, ought to be regarded as a transparently false pretext.

I have now before me a list (prepared by a much stronger hand than mine) of honest cases in which men, avoiding Scylla, run into Charybdis : in which men, thinking to bend the crooked twig straight, bend it backwards. But before mentioning these, it may be remarked, that there often is such a thing as a reaction from a natural tendency, even when that natural tendency is not towards what may be called a primary vulgar error. The law of reaction extends to all that human beings can ever feel the disposition to think or do. There are, doubtless, minds of great fixity of opinion and motive : and there are certain things, in the case of almost all men, as regards which their belief and their active bias never vary through life : but with most human beings, with nations, with humankind, as regards very many and very important matters, as surely and as far as the pendulum has swung to the right, so surely and so far will it swing to the left. I do not say that an opinion in favour of monarchy is a primary vulgar error ; or that an opinion in favour

of republicanism is a secondary: both may be equally right: but assuredly each of these is a reaction from the other. America, for instance, is one great reaction from Europe. The principle on which these reactionary swings of the pendulum take place is plain. Whatever be your present position, you feel its evils and drawbacks keenly. Your feeling of the present evil is much more vivid than your imagination of the evil which is sure to be inherent in the opposite system, whatever that may be. You live in a country where the National Church is Presbyterian. You see, day by day, many inconveniences and disadvantages inherent in that form of church government. It is of the nature of evil to make its presence much more keenly felt than the presence of good. So while keenly alive to the drawbacks of presbytery, you are hardly conscious of its advantages. You swing over, let us suppose, to the other end: you swing over from Scotland into England, from presbytery to episcopacy. For a while you are quite delighted to find yourself free from the little evils of which you had been wont to complain. But by-and-bye the drawbacks of episcopacy begin to push themselves upon your notice. You have escaped one set of disadvantages: you find that you have got into the middle of another. Scylla no longer bellows in your hearing; but Charybdis whirls you round. You begin to feel that the country and the system yet remain to be sought, in which some

form of evil, of inconvenience, of worry, shall not press you. Am I wrong in fancying, dear friends more than one or two, that but for very shame the pendulum would swing back again to the point from which it started : and you, kindly Scots, would find yourselves more at home in kindly and homely Scotland, with her simple forms and faith ? So far as my experience has gone, I think that in all matters not of vital moment, it is best that the pendulum should stay at the end of the swing where it first found itself : it will be in no more stable position at the other end : and it will somehow feel stranger-like there. And you, my friend, though in your visits to Anglican territory you heartily conform to the Anglican Church, and enjoy as much as mortal can her noble cathedrals and her stately worship ; still I know that, after all, you cannot shake off the spell in which the old remembrances of your boyhood have bound you. I know that your heart warms to the Burning Bush ; \* and that it will, till death chills it.

A noteworthy fact in regard to the swing of the pendulum, is that the secondary tendency is sometimes found in the ruder state of society, and the less reflective man. Naturalness comes last. The pendulum started from naturalness : it swung over into artificiality : and with thoughtful people it \* has swung back to naturalness again. Thus it is natural,

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\* The scutcheon of the Church of Scotland.

when in danger, to be afraid. It is natural, when you are possessed of any strong feeling, to show it. You see all this in children : this is the point which the pendulum starts from. It swings over, and we find a reaction from this. The reaction is, to maintain and exhibit perfect coolness and indifference in danger ; to pretend to be incapable of fear. This state of things we find in the Red Indian, a rude and uncivilised being. But it is plain that with people who are able to think, there must be a reaction from this. The pendulum cannot long stay in a position which flies so completely in the face of the law of gravitation. It is pure nonsense to talk about being incapable of fear. I remember reading somewhere about Queen Elizabeth, that ‘ her soul was incapable of fear.’ That statement is false and absurd. You may regard fear as unmanly and unworthy : you may repress the manifestations of it ; but the state of mind which (in beings not properly monstrous or defective) follows the perception of being in danger, is fear. As surely as the perception of light is sight, so surely is the perception of danger fear. And for a man to say that his soul is incapable of fear, is just as absurd as to say that from a peculiarity of constitution, when dipped in water, he does not get wet. You, human being, whoever you may be, when you are placed in danger, and know you are placed in danger, and reflect on the fact, you feel afraid. Don’t vapour



and say no ; we know how the mental machine *must* work, unless it be diseased. Now, the thoughtful man admits all this : he admits that a bullet through his brain would be a very serious thing for himself ; and likewise for his wife and children : he admits that he shrinks from such a prospect ; he will take pains to protect himself from the risk ; but he says that if duty requires him to run the risk he will run it. *This* is the courage of the civilised man as opposed to the blind, bull-dog insensibility of the savage. *This* is courage—to know the existence of danger, but to face it, nevertheless. Here, under the influence of longer thought, the pendulum has swung into common sense, though not quite back to the point from which it started. Of course, it still keeps swinging about in individual minds. The other day I read in a newspaper a speech by a youthful rifleman, in which he boasted that no matter to what danger exposed, *his* corps would never take shelter behind trees and rocks, but would stand boldly out to the aim of the enemy. I was very glad to find this speech answered in a letter to the *Times*, written by a rifleman of great experience and proved bravery. The experienced man pointed out that the inexperienced man was talking nonsense : that true courage appeared in manfully facing risks which were inevitable, but not in running into needless peril : and that the business of a soldier was to be as useful to his country and as destructive to the enemy as pos-

sible, and not to make needless exhibitions of personal foolhardiness. Thus swings the pendulum as to danger and fear. The point of departure, the primary impulse, is,

1. An impulse to avoid danger at all hazards: i. e., to run away, and save yourself, however discredibly.

The pendulum swings to the other extremity, and we have the secondary impulse—

2. An impulse to disregard danger, and even to run into it, as if it were of no consequence at all; i. e., young rifleman foolhardiness, and Red Indian insensibility.


The pendulum comes so far back, and rests at the point of wisdom :

3. A determination to avoid all danger, the running into which would do no good, and which may be avoided consistently with honour ; but manfully to face danger, however great, that comes in the way of duty.

But after all this deviation from the track, I return to my list of Secondary Vulgar Errors, run into with good and honest intentions. Here is the first—

Don't you know, my reader, that it is natural to think very bitterly of the misconduct which affects yourself? If a man cheats your friend, or cheats your slight acquaintance, or cheats some one who is quite unknown to you, by selling him a lame horse,

you disapprove his conduct, indeed, but not nearly so much as if he had cheated yourself. You learn that Miss Limejuice has been disseminating a grossly untrue account of some remarks which you made in her hearing: and your first impulse is to condemn her malicious falsehood much more severely than if she had merely told a few lies about some one else. Yet it is quite evident that if we were to estimate the doings of men with perfect justice, we should fix solely on the moral element in their doings; and the accidental circumstance of the offence or injury to ourselves would be neither here nor there. The primary vulgar error, then, in this case is, undue and excessive disapprobation of misconduct from which *we* have suffered. No one but a very stupid person would, if it were fairly put to him, maintain that this extreme disapprobation was right: but it cannot be denied that this is the direction to which *all* human beings are likely, at first, to feel an impulse to go. A man does you some injury: you are much angrier than if he had done the like injury to some one else. You are much angrier when your own servants are guilty of little neglects and follies, than when the servants of your next neighbour are guilty in a precisely similar degree. The Prime Minister (or Chancellor) fails to make you a Queen's Counsel or a Judge: you are much more angry than if he had overlooked some other man, of precisely equal merit. And I do not mean merely that the injury



done to yourself comes more home to you, but that positively you think it a worse thing. It seems as if there were more of moral evil in it. The boy who steals your plums seems worse than other boys stealing other plums. The servant who sells your oats and starves your horses, seems worse than other servants who do the like. It is not merely that you feel where the shoe pinches yourself, more than where it pinches another : *that* is all quite right. It is that you have a tendency to think it is a worse shoe than another which gives an exactly equal amount of pain. You are prone to dwell upon and brood over the misconduct which affected yourself. •

Well, you begin to see that this is unworthy, that selfishness and mortified conceit are at the foundation of it. You determine that you will shake yourself free from this vulgar error. What more magnanimous, you think, than to do the opposite of the wrong thing? Surely it will be generous, and even heroic, to wholly acquit the wrong doer, and even to cherish him for a bosom friend. So the pendulum swings over to the opposite extreme, and you land in the secondary vulgar error. I do not mean to say that in practice many persons are likely to thus bend the twig backwards ; but it is no small evil to think that it would be a right thing, and a fine thing, to do even that which you never intend to do. So you write an essay, or even a book, the gist of which is that it is a grand thing to select for a friend and

guide the human being who has done you signal injustice and harm. Over that book, if it be a prettily written tale, many young ladies will weep ; and though without the faintest intention of imitating your hero's behaviour, they will think that it would be a fine thing if they did so. And it is a great mischief to pervert the moral judgment and falsely to excite the moral feelings. You forget that wrong is wrong, though it be done against yourself, and that you have no right to acquit the wrong to yourself as though it were no wrong at all. *That* lies beyond your province. You may forgive the personal offence, but it does not rest with you to acquit the guilt. You have no right to confuse moral distinctions by practically saying that wrong is not wrong, because it is done against you. All wrong is against very many things and very grave things, besides being against you. It is not for you to speak in the name of God and the universe. You may not wish to say much about the injury done to yourself, but *there it is* ; and as to the choosing for your friend the man who has greatly injured you, in most cases such a choice would be a very unwise one, because in most cases it would amount to this—that you should select a man for a certain post mainly because he has shown himself possessed of qualities which unfit him for that post. *That* surely would be very foolish. If you had to appoint a postman, would you choose a man because he had no legs ?

And what is very foolish can never be very magnanimous.

The right course to follow lies between the two which have been set out. The man who has done wrong to you is still a *wrong-doer*. The question you have to consider is, What ought your conduct to be towards a wrong-doer? Let there be no harbour given to any feeling of personal revenge. But remember that it is your duty to disapprove what is wrong, and that it is wisdom not too far to trust a man who has proved himself unworthy to be trusted. I have no feeling of selfish bitterness against the person who deceived me deliberately and grossly, yet I cannot but judge that deliberate and gross deceit is bad; and I cannot but judge that the person who deceived me once might, if tempted, deceive me again: so he shall not have the opportunity. I look at the horse which a friend offers me for a short ride. I discern upon the knees of the animal a certain slight but unmistakeable roughness of the hair. That horse has been down; and if I mount that horse at all (which I shall not do except in a case of necessity), I shall ride him with a tight rein, and with a sharp look-out for rolling stones.

• Another matter in regard to which Scylla and Charybdis are very discernible, is the fashion in which human beings think and speak of the good or bad qualities of their friends.

The primary tendency here is to blindness to the faults of a friend, and over-estimate of his virtues and qualifications. Most people are disposed extravagantly to over-value anything belonging to or connected with themselves. A farmer tells you that there never were such turnips as his turnips ; a school-boy thinks that the world cannot show boys so clever as those with whom he is competing for the first place in his class ; a clever student at college tells you what magnificent fellows are certain of his compeers—how sure they are to become great men in life. Talk of Tennyson ! You have not read Smith's prize poem. Talk of Macaulay ! Ah, if you could see Brown's prize essay ! A mother tells you (fathers are generally less infatuated) how her boy was beyond comparison the most distinguished and clever in his class—how he stood quite apart from any of the others. Your eye happens to fall a day or two afterwards upon the prize-list advertised in the newspapers, and you discover that (curiously) the most distinguished and clever boy in that particular school is rewarded with the seventh prize. I dare say you may have met with families in which there existed the most absurd and preposterous belief as to their superiority, social, intellectual, and moral, above other families which were as good or better. And it is to be admitted, that if you are happy enough to have a friend whose virtues and qualifications are

really high, your primary tendency will probably be to fancy him a great deal cleverer, wiser, and better than he really is, and to imagine that he possesses no faults at all. The over-estimate of his good qualities will be the result of your seeing them constantly, and having their excellence much pressed on your attention, while from not knowing so well other men who are quite as good, you are led to think that those good qualities are more rare and excellent than in fact they are. And you may possibly regard it as a duty to shut your eyes to the faults of those who are dear to you, and to persuade yourself, against your judgment, that they have no faults or none worth thinking of. One can imagine a child painfully struggling to be blind to a parent's errors, and thinking it undutiful and wicked to admit the existence of that which is too evident. And if you know well a really good and able man, you will very naturally think his goodness and his ability to be relatively much greater than they are. For goodness and ability are in truth very noble things : the more you look at them the more you will feel this : and it is natural to judge that what is so noble cannot be very common ; whereas in fact there is much more good in this world than we are ready to believe. If you find an intelligent person who believes that some particular author is by far the best in the language, or that some particular composer's music is by far the finest, or that some particular preacher



is by far the most eloquent and useful, or that some particular river has by far the finest scenery, or that some particular sea-side place has by far the most bracing and exhilarating air, or that some particular magazine is ten thousand miles ahead of all competitors, the simple explanation in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is this—that the honest individual who holds these overstrained opinions *knows* a great deal better than he knows any others, that author, that music, that preacher, that river, that sea-side place, that magazine. He knows how good they are: and not having much studied the merits of competing things, he does not know that these are very nearly as good.

But I do not think that there is any subject whatever in regard to which it is so capricious and arbitrary whether you shall run into Scylla or into Charybdis. It depends entirely on how it strikes the mind, whether you shall go off a thousand miles to the right or a thousand miles to the left. You know, if you fire a rifle bullet at an iron-coated ship, the bullet, if it impinge upon the iron plate at A, may glance away to the west, while if it impinge upon the iron plate at B, only an inch distant from A, it may glance off towards the directly opposite point of the compass. A very little thing makes all the difference. You stand in the engine-room of a steamer; you admit the steam to the cylinders, and the paddles turn ahead; a touch of a lever, you admit the self-same steam to the self-same cylinders, and the

paddles turn astern. It is so oftentimes in the moral world. The turning of a straw decides whether the engines shall work forward or backward.

Now, given a friend, to whom you are very warmly attached : it is a toss-up whether your affection for your friend shall make you,

1. Quite blind to his faults ; or,
2. Acutely and painfully alive to his faults.

Sincere affection may impel either way. Your friend, for instance, makes a speech at a public dinner. He makes a tremendously bad speech. Now, your love for him may lead you either

1. To fancy that his speech is a remarkably good one ; or,
2. To feel acutely how bad his speech is, and to wish you could sink through the floor for very shame.

If you did not care for him at all, you would not mind a bit whether he made a fool of himself or not. But if you really care for him, and if the speech be really very bad, and if you are competent to judge whether speeches in general be bad or not, I do not see how you can escape falling either into Scylla or Charybdis. And accordingly, while there are families in which there exists a preposterous over-estimate of the talents and acquirements of their several members, there are other families in which the rifle-bullet has glanced off in the opposite direction, and in which there exists a depressing and unreasonable under-estimate of the talents and acquirements of

their several members. I have known such a thing as a family in which certain boys during their early education had it ceaselessly drilled into them that they were the idlest, stupidest, and most ignorant boys in the world. The poor little fellows grew up under that gloomy belief: for conscience is a very artificial thing, and you may bring up very good boys in the belief that they are very bad. At length, happily, they went to a great public school; and like rockets they went up forthwith to the top of their classes, and never lost their places there. From school they went to the university, and there won honours more eminent than ever had been won before. It will not surprise people who know much of human nature, to be told that through this brilliant career of school and college work the home belief in their idleness and ignorance continued unchanged, and that hardly at its end was the toil-worn senior wrangler regarded as other than an idle and useless blockhead. Now, the affection which prompts the under-estimate may be quite as real and deep as that which prompts the over-estimate, but its manifestation is certainly the less amiable and pleasing. I have known a successful author whose relatives never believed, till the reviews assured them of it, that his writings were anything but contemptible and discreditable trash.

I have been speaking of an honest though erroneous estimate of the qualities of one's friends, rather

than of any expression of that estimate. The primary tendency is to an over-estimate ; the secondary tendency is to an under-estimate. A commonplace man thinks there never was mortal so wise and good as the friend he values ; a man who is a thousandth part of a degree less commonplace resolves that he will keep clear of that error, and accordingly he feels bound to exaggerate the failings of his friend and to extenuate his good qualities. He thinks that a friend's judgment is very good and sound, and that he may well rely upon it ; but for fear of showing it too much regard, he probably shows it too little. He thinks that in some dispute his friend is right ; but for fear of being partial he decides that his friend is wrong. It is obvious that in any instance in which a man, seeking to avoid the primary error of over-estimating his friend, falls into the secondary of under-estimating him, he will (if any importance be attached to his judgment) damage his friend's character ; for most people will conclude that he is saying of his friend the best that can be said ; and that if even *he* admits that there is so little to approve about his friend, there must be very little indeed to approve ; whereas the truth may be, that he is saying the worst that can be said—that no man could with justice give a worse picture of the friend's character.

Not very far removed from this pair of vulgar errors stand the following :

The primary vulgar error is, to set up as an infallible oracle one whom we regard as wise—to regard any question as settled finally if we know what is his opinion upon it. You remember the man in the *Spectator* who was always quoting the sayings of Mr. Nisby. There was a report in London that the Grand Vizier was dead. The good man was uncertain whether to believe the report or not. He went and talked with Mr. Nisby and returned with his mind reassured. Now, he enters in his diary that ‘the Grand Vizier was certainly dead.’ Considering the weakness of the reasoning powers of many people, there is something pleasing after all in this tendency to look round for somebody stronger upon whom they may lean. It is wise and natural in a scarlet runner to climb up something, for it could not grow up by itself; and for practical purposes it is well that in each household there should be a little Pope, whose *dicta* on all topics shall be unquestionable. It saves what is to many people the painful effort of making up their mind what they are to do or to think. It enables them to think or act with much greater decision and confidence. Most men have always a lurking distrust of their own judgment, unless they find it confirmed by that of somebody else. There are very many decent commonplace people who, if they had been reading a book or article and had been thinking it very fine, would, if you were resolutely and loudly to declare in their hearing that it was

wretched trash, begin to think that it was wretched trash too.

The primary vulgar error, then, is to regard as an oracle one whom we esteem as wise; and the secondary, the Charybdis opposite to this Scylla, is, to entertain an excessive dread of being too much led by one whom we esteem as wise. I mean an honest candid dread. I do not mean a petted, wrong-headed, pragmatical determination to let him see that you can think for yourself. You see, my friend, I don't suppose you to be a self-conceited fool. You remember how Presumption, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, on being offered some good advice, cut his kind adviser short by declaring that *Every tub must stand on its own bottom*. We have all known men, young and old, who, upon being advised to do something which they knew they ought to do, would out of pure perversity and a wrongheaded independence, go and do just the opposite thing. The secondary error of which I am now thinking is that of the man who honestly dreads making too much of the judgment of any mortal; and who, acting from a good intention, probably goes wrong in the same direction as the wrongheaded conceited man. Now, don't you know that to such an extent does this morbid fear of trusting too much to any mortal go in some men, that in their practical belief you would think that the fact of any man being very wise was a reason why his judgment should be set aside as

unworthy of consideration ; and more particularly, that the fact of any man being supposed to be a powerful reasoner, was quite enough to show that all he says is to go for nothing ? You are quite aware how jauntily some people use this last consideration, to sweep away at once all the reasons given by an able and ingenious speaker or writer. And it cuts the ground effectually from under his feet. You state an opinion, somewhat opposed to that commonly received. An honest, stupid person meets it with a surprised stare. You tell him (I am recording what I have myself witnessed) that you have been reading a work on the subject by a certain prelate : you state as well as you can the arguments which are set forth by the distinguished prelate. These arguments seem of great weight. They deserve at least to be carefully considered. They seem to prove the novel opinion to be just : they assuredly call on candid minds to ponder the whole matter well before relapsing into the old current way of thinking. Do you expect that the honest, stupid person will judge thus ? If so, you are mistaken. He is not shaken in the least by all these strong reasons. The man who has set these reasons forth is known to be a master of logic ; *that* is good ground why all his reasons should count for nothing. *Oh*, says the stupid, honest person, *we all know that the Archbishop can prove anything !* And so the whole thing is finally settled.

I have a considerable list of instances in which the reaction from an error on one side of the line of right, lands in error equally distant from the line of right on the other side : but it is needless to go on to illustrate these at length ; the mere mention of them will suffice to suggest many thoughts to the intelligent reader. A primary vulgar error, to which very powerful minds have frequently shown a strong tendency, is bigoted intolerance : intolerance in politics, in religion, in ecclesiastical affairs, in morals, in anything. You may safely say that nothing but most unreasonable bigotry would lead a Tory to say that all Whigs are scoundrels, or a Whig to say that all Tories are bloated tyrants or crawling sycophants. I must confess that, in severe reason, it is impossible entirely to justify the Churchman who holds that all Dissenters are extremely bad ; though (so does inveterate prepossession warp the intellect) I have also to admit that it appears to me that for a Dissenter to hold that there is little or no good in the Church is a great deal worse. There is something fine, however, about a heartily intolerant man : you like him, though you disapprove of him. Even if I were inclined to Whiggery, I should admire the downright dictum of Dr. Johnson, that *the devil was the first Whig*. Even if I were a Nonconformist, I should like Sydney Smith the better for the singular proof of his declining strength which he once adduced : ‘I do believe,’ he said, ‘that if you



were to put a knife into my hand, I should not have vigour enough to stick it into a Dissenter !' The secondary error in this respect is a latitudinarian liberality which regards truth and falsehood as matters of indifference. Genuine liberality of sentiment is a good thing, and difficult as it is good : but much liberality, political and religious, arises really from the fact, that the liberal man does not care a rush about the matter in debate. It is very easy to be tolerant in a case in which you have no feeling whatever either way. The Churchman who does not mind a bit whether the Church stands or falls, has no difficulty in tolerating the enemies and assailants of the Church. It is different with a man who holds the existence of a national Establishment as a vital matter. And I have generally remarked that when clergymen of the Church profess extreme catholicity of spirit, and declare that they do not regard it as a thing of the least consequence whether a man be Churchman or Dissenter, intelligent Nonconformists receive such protestations with much contempt, and (possibly with injustice) suspect their utterer of hypocrisy. If you really care much about any principle ; and if you regard it as of essential importance ; you cannot help feeling a strong impulse to intolerance of those who decidedly and actively differ from you.

Here are some further vulgar errors, primary and secondary :

Primary—Idleness, and excessive self-indulgence;  
Secondary—Penances, and self-inflicted tortures.

Primary—*Swallowing whole* all that is said or done by one's party ;

Secondary—Dread of quite agreeing, or quite disagreeing on any point with any one ; and trying to keep at exactly an equal distance from each.

Primary—Following the fashion with indiscriminate ardour ;

Secondary—Finding a merit in singularity, as such.

Primary—Being quite captivated with thought which is striking and showy, but not sound ;

Secondary—Concluding that whatever is sparkling must be unsound.

I hardly know which tendency of the following is the primary, and which the secondary ; but I am sure that both exist. It may depend upon the district of country, and the age of the thinker, which of the two is the action and which the reaction :

1. Thinking a clergyman a model of perfection, because he is a stout dashing fellow who plays at cricket and goes out fox-hunting ; and, generally, who flies in the face of all conventionalism ;

2. Thinking a clergyman a model of perfection,

because he is of very grave and decorous deportment; never plays at cricket, and never goes out fox-hunting; and, generally, conforms carefully to all the little proprieties.

1. Thinking a bishop a model prelate because he has no stiffness or ceremony about him, but talks frankly to everybody, and puts all who approach him at their ease;

2. Thinking a bishop a model prelate because he never descends from his dignity; never forgets that he *is* a bishop, and keeps all who approach him in their proper places.

1. Thinking the Anglican Church service the best, because it is so decorous, solemn, and dignified;

2. Thinking the Scotch Church service the best, because it is so simple and so capable of adaptation to all circumstances which may arise.

1. Thinking an artisan a sensible right-minded man, knowing his station, because he is always very respectful in his demeanour to the squire, and great folks generally;

2. Thinking an artisan a fine, manly, independent fellow, because he is always much less respectful in his demeanour to the squire than he is to other people.

1. Thinking it a fine thing to be a fast, reckless,

swaggering, drinking, swearing reprobate : Being ashamed of the imputation of being a well-behaved and (above all) a pious and conscientious young man : Thinking it manly to do wrong, and washy to do right ;

2. Thinking it a despicable thing to be a fast, reckless, swaggering, drinking, swearing reprobate : Thinking that it is manly to do right, and shameful to do wrong.

1. That a young man should begin his letters to his father with *HONOURED SIR* ; and treat the old gentleman with extraordinary deference upon all occasions ;

2. That a young man should begin his remarks to his father on any subject with, *I SAY, GOVERNOR* ; and treat the old gentleman upon all occasions with no deference at all.

But indeed, intelligent reader, the swing of the pendulum is the type of the greater amount of human opinion and human feeling. In individuals, in communities, in parishes, in little country towns, in great nations, from hour to hour, from week to week, from century to century, the pendulum swings to and fro. From *Yes* on the one side to *No* on the other side of almost all conceivable questions, the pendulum swings. Sometimes it swings over from *Yes* to *No* in a few hours or days ; sometimes it takes centuries to pass from the one extremity to the

other. In feeling, in taste, in judgment, in the grandest matters and the least, the pendulum swings. From Popery to Puritanism ; from Puritanism back towards Popery ; from Imperialism to Republicanism, and back towards Imperialism again ; from Gothic architecture to Palladian, and from Palladian back to Gothic ; from hooped petticoats to drapery of the scantiest, and from that backwards to the multitudinous crinoline ; from crying up the science of arms to crying it down, and back ; from the schoolboy telling you that his companion Brown is the jolliest fellow, to the schoolboy telling you that his companion Brown is a beast, and back again ; from very high carriages to very low ones, and back ; from very short horsetails to very long ones, and back again—the pendulum swings. In matters of serious judgment it is comparatively easy to discern the rationale of this oscillation from side to side. It is that the evils of what is present are strongly felt, while the evils of what is absent are forgotten ; and so, when the pendulum has swung over to A, the evils of A send it flying over to B, while when it reaches B the evils of B repel it again to A. In matters of feeling it is less easy to discover the how and why of the process : we can do no more than take refuge in the general belief that nature loves the swing of the pendulum. There are people who at one time have an excessive affection for some friend, and at another take a violent disgust at him ; and who (though

sometimes permanently remaining at the latter point) oscillate between these positive and negative poles. You, being a sensible man, would not feel very happy if some men were loudly crying you up : for you would be very sure that in a little while they would be loudly crying you down. If you should ever happen to feel for one day an extraordinary lightness and exhilaration of spirits, you will know that you must pay for all this the price of corresponding depression—the hot fit must be counter-balanced by the cold. Let us thank God that there are beliefs and sentiments as to which the pendulum does not swing, though even in these I have known it do so. I have known the young girl who appeared thoroughly good and pious, who devoted herself to works of charity, and (with even an over-scrupulous spirit) eschewed vain company : and who by-and-bye learned to laugh at all serious things, and ran into the utmost extremes of giddiness and extravagant gaiety. And not merely should all of us be thankful if we feel that in regard to the gravest sentiments and beliefs our mind and heart remain year after year at the same fixed point : I think we should be thankful if we find that as regards our favourite books and authors our taste remains unchanged ; that the calm judgment of our middle age approves the preferences of ten years since, and that these gather strength as time gives them the witchery of old remembrances and associations. You enthusi-

astically admired Byron once, you estimate him very differently now. You once thought *Festus* finer than *Paradise Lost*, but you have swung away from *that*. But for a good many years you have held by Wordsworth, Shakspeare, and Tennyson, and this taste you are not likely to outgrow. It is very curious to look over a volume which we once thought magnificent, enthralling, incomparable ; and to wonder how on earth we ever cared for that stilted rubbish. No doubt the pendulum swings quite as decidedly to your estimate of yourself as to your estimate of any one else. It would be nothing at all to have other people attacking and depreciating your writings, sermons, and the like, if you yourself had entire confidence in them. The mortifying thing is when your own taste and judgment say worse of your former productions than could be said by the most unfriendly critic ; and the dreadful thought occurs, that if you yourself to-day think so badly of what you wrote ten years since, it is probable enough that on this day ten years hence (if you live to see it) you may think as badly of what you are writing to-day. Let us hope not. Let us trust that at length a standard of taste and judgment is reached from which we shall not ever materially swing away. Yet the pendulum will never be quite arrested as to your estimate of yourself. Now and then you will think yourself a blockhead : by-and-bye you will think yourself very clever ; and your judgment will oscillate between

these opposite poles of belief. Sometimes you will think that your house is remarkably comfortable, sometimes that it is unendurably uncomfortable ; sometimes you will think that your place in life is a very dignified and important one, sometimes that it is a very poor and insignificant one ; sometimes you will think that some misfortune or disappointment which has befallen you is a very crushing one ; sometimes you will think that it is better as it is. Ah, my brother, it is a poor, weak, wayward thing, the human heart !

You know, of course, how the pendulum of public opinion swings backwards and forwards. The truth lies somewhere about the middle of the arc it describes, in most cases. You know how the popularity of political men oscillates, from A, the point of greatest popularity, to B, the point of no popularity at all. Think of Lord Brougham. Once the pendulum swung far to the right : he was the most popular man in Britain. Then, for many years, the pendulum swung far to the left, into the cold regions of unpopularity, loss of influence, and opposition benches. And now, in his last days, the pendulum has come over to the right again. So with lesser men. When the new clergyman comes to a country parish, how high his estimation ! Never was there preacher so impressive, pastor so diligent, man so frank and agreeable. By-and-bye his sermons are middling, his diligence middling ; his manners rather



stiff or rather too easy. In a year or two the pendulum rests at its proper point: and from that time onward the parson gets, in most cases, very nearly the credit he deserves. The like oscillation of public opinion and feeling exists in the case of unfavourable as of favourable judgments. A man commits a great crime. His guilt is thought awful. There is a general outcry for his condign punishment. He is sentenced to be hanged. In a few days the tide begins to turn. His crime was not so great. He had met great provocation. His education had been neglected. He deserves pity rather than reprobation.\* Petitions are got up that he should be let off; and largely signed by the self-same folk who were loudest in the outcry against him. And instead of this fact, that those folk were the keenest against the criminal, being received (as it ought) as proof that their opinion is worth nothing at all, many will receive it as proof that their opinion is entitled to special consideration. The principle of the pendulum in the matter of criminals is well understood by the Old Bailey practitioners of New York and their worthy clients. When a New Yorker is sentenced to be hanged, he remains as cool as a cucumber; for the New York law is, that a year must pass between the sentence and the execution. And long before the year passes, the public sympathy has turned in the criminal's favour. Endless petitions go up for his pardon. Of course he gets off.

And indeed it is not improbable that he may receive a public testimonial. It cannot be denied that the natural transition in the popular feeling is from applauding a man to hanging him, and from hanging a man to applauding him.

Even so does the pendulum swing, and the world run away !

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCERNING CHURCHYARDS.

MANY persons do not like to go near a churchyard: some do not like even to hear a churchyard mentioned. Many others feel an especial interest in that quiet place—an interest which is quite unconnected with any personal associations with it. A great deal depends upon habit; and a great deal turns, too, on whether the churchyard which we know best is a locked-up, deserted, neglected place, all grown over with nettles; or a spot not too much retired, open to all passers-by, with trimly-mown grass and neat gravelled walks. I do not sympathise with the taste which converts a burying-place into a flower-garden or a fashionable lounge for thoughtless people: let it be the true ‘country churchyard,’ only with some appearance of being remembered and cared for. For myself, though a very commonplace person, and not at all sentimentally inclined, I have a great

liking for a churchyard. Hardly a day passes on which I do not go and walk up and down for a little in that which surrounds my church. Probably some people may regard me as extremely devoid of occupation, when I confess that daily, after breakfast, and before sitting down to my work (which is pretty hard, though they may not think so), I walk slowly down to the churchyard, which is a couple of hundred yards off, and there pace about for a few minutes, looking at the old graves, and the mossy stones. Nor is this only in summer-time, when the sward is white with daisies, when the ancient oaks around the gray wall are leafy and green, when the passing river flashes bright through their openings and runs chiming over the warm stones, and when the beautiful hills that surround the quiet spot at a little distance are flecked with summer light and shade; but in winter too, when the bare branches look sharp against the frosty sky, and the graves look like wavelets on a sea of snow. Now, if I were anxious to pass myself off upon my readers as a great and thoughtful man, I might here give an account of the profound thoughts which I think in my daily musings in my pretty churchyard. But, being an essentially commonplace person (as I have no doubt about nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of my readers also are), I must here confess that generally I walk about the churchyard, thinking and feeling nothing very particular. I do

not believe that ordinary people, when worried by some little care, or pressed down by some little sorrow, have only to go and muse in a churchyard in order to feel how trivial and transient such cares and sorrows are, and how very little they ought to vex us. To commonplace mortals, it is the sunshine within the breast that does most to brighten ; and the thing that has most power to darken is the shadow there. And the scenes and teachings of external nature have, practically, very little effect indeed. And so, when musing in the churchyard, nothing grand, heroical, philosophical, or tremendous ever suggests itself to me. I look with pleasure at the neatly cut walks and grass. I peep in at a window of the church, and think how I am to finish my sermon for next Sunday. I read over the inscriptions on the stones which mark where seven of my predecessors sleep. I look vacantly at the lichens and moss which have overgrown certain tombstones three or four centuries old. And occasionally I think of what and where I shall be, when the village mason, whistling cheerfully at his task, shall cut out my name and years on the stone which will mark my last resting-place. But all these, of course, are commonplace thoughts, just what would occur to anybody else, and really not worth repeating.

And yet, although 'death, and the house appointed for all living,' form a topic which has been

treated by innumerable writers, from the author of the book of Job to Mr. Dickens ; and although the subject might well be vulgarised by having been, for many a day, the stock resort of every commonplace aimèr at the pathetic ; still the theme is one which never can grow old. And the experience and the heart of most men convert into touching eloquence even the poorest formula of set phrases about the tremendous Fact. Nor are we able to repress a strong interest in any account of the multitude of fashions in which the mortal part of man has been disposed of, after the great change has passed upon it. In a volume entitled *God's Acre*, written by a lady, one Mrs. Stone, and published a year or two since, you may find a great amount of curious information upon such points : and after thinking of the various ways of burial described, I think you will return with a feeling of home and of relief to the quiet English country churchyard. I should think that the shocking and revolting description of the burning of the remains of Shelley, published by Mr. Trelawney, in his *Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, will go far to destroy any probability of the introduction of cremation in this country, notwithstanding the ingenuity and the eloquence of the little treatise published about two years ago by a Member of the College of Surgeons, whose gist you will understand from its title, which is *Burning the Dead ; or, Urn-Sepulture Religiously, Socially, and*

*Generally considered; with Suggestions for a Revival of the Practice, as a Sanitary Measure.* The choice lies between burning and burying: and the latter being universally accepted in Britain, it remains that it be carried out in the way most decorous as regards the deceased, and most soothing to the feelings of surviving friends. Every one has seen burying-places of all conceivable kinds, and every one knows how prominent a feature they form in the English landscape. There is the dismal corner in the great city, surrounded by blackened walls, where scarce a blade of grass will grow, and where the whole thing is foul and pestilential. There is the ideal country churchyard, like that described by Gray, where the old elms and yews keep watch over the graves where successive generations of simple rustics have found their last resting-place, and where in the twilight the owls hoot from the tower of the ivy-covered church. There is the bare enclosure, surrounded by four walls, and without a tree, far up the lonely Highland hill-side; and more lonely still, the little gray stone rising above the purple heather, where rude letters, touched up by Old Mortality's hands, tell that one, probably two or three, rest beneath, who were done to death for what *they* firmly believed was their Redeemer's cause, by Claverhouse or Dalrymple. There is the churchyard by the bleak sea-shore, where coffins have been laid bare by the encroaching waves; and the niche in cathedral crypt,

or the vault under the church's floor. I cannot conceive anything more irreverent than the American fashion of burying in unconsecrated earth, each family having its own place of interment in the corner of its own garden : unless it be the crotchet of the silly old peer, who spent the last years of his life in erecting near his castle-door a preposterous building, the progress of which he watched day by day with the interest of a man who had worn out all other interest, occasionally lying down in the stone coffin which he had caused to be prepared, to make sure that it would fit him. I feel sorry, too, for the poor old Pope, who when he dies is laid on a shelf above a door in St. Peter's, where he remains till the next Pope dies, and then is put out of the way to make room for him ; nor do I at all envy the noble who has his family vault filled with coffins covered with velvet and gold, occupied exclusively by corpses of good quality. It is better surely to be laid, as Allan Cunningham wished, where we shall ' not be built over ;' where ' the wind shall blow and the daisy grow upon our grave.' Let it be among our kindred, indeed, in accordance with the natural desire ; but not on dignified shelves, not in aristocratic vaults, but lowly and humbly, where the Christian dead sleep for the Resurrection. Most people will sympathise so far with Beattie, though his lines show that he was a Scotchman, and lived where there are not many trees :—



Mine be the breezy hill, that skirts the down,  
 Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,  
 With here and there a violet bestrown,  
 Fast by a brook, or fountain's murmuring wave ;  
 And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave !

• But it depends entirely upon individual associations and fancies where one would wish to rest after life's fitful fever : and I have hardly ever been more deeply impressed than by certain lines which I cut out of an old newspaper when I was a boy, and which set out a choice far different from that of *The Minstrel*. They are written by Mr. Westwood, a true poet, though not known as he deserves to be. Here they are :—

Not there, not there !

Not in that nook, that ye deem so fair ;—  
 Little reck I of the blue bright sky,  
 And the stream th' it floweth so murmuringly,  
 And the bending boughs, and the breezy air—  
 Not there, good friends, not there !

In the city churchyard, where the grass  
 Groweth rank and black, and where never a ray  
 Of that self-same sun doth find its way  
 Through the heaped-up houses' serried mass—  
 Where the only sounds are the voice of the throng,  
 And the clatter of wheels as they rush along—  
 Or the plash of the rain, or the wind's hoarse cry,  
 Or the busy tramp of the passer by,  
 Or the toll of the bell on the heavy air—  
 Good friends, let it be *there* !

I am old, my friends—I am very old—  
 Fourscore and five—and bitter cold  
 Were that air on the hill-side far away ;  
 \*Eighty full years, content, I trow,

Have I lived in the home where ye see me now,  
 And trod those dark streets day by day,  
 Till my soul doth love them ; I love them all,  
 Each battered pavement, and blackened wall,  
 Each court and corner. Good sooth ! to me  
 They are all comely and fair to see—  
 They have *old faces*—each one doth tell  
 A tale of its own, that doth like me well—  
 Sad or merry, as it may be,  
 From the quaint old book of my history.  
 And, friends, when this weary pain is past,  
 Fain would I lay me to rest at last  
 In their very midst ; full sure am I,  
 How dark soever be earth and sky,  
 I shall sleep softly—I shall know  
 That the things I loved so here below  
 Are about me still—so never care  
 That my last home looketh all bleak and bare—  
 Good friends, let it be *there* !

Some persons appear to think that it argues strength of mind and freedom from unworthy prejudice, to profess great indifference as to what becomes of their mortal part after they die. I have met with men who talked in a vapouring manner about leaving their bodies to be dissected ; and who evidently enjoyed the sensation which such sentiments produced among simple folk. Whenever I hear any man talk in this way, my politeness, of course, prevents my telling him that he is an uncommonly silly person ; but it does not prevent my thinking him one. It is a mistake to imagine that the soul is the entire man. Human nature, alike here and hereafter, consists of soul and body in

union : and the body is therefore justly entitled to its own degree of thought and care. But the point, indeed, is not one to be argued ; it is, as it appears to me, a matter of intuitive judgment and instinctive feeling ; and I apprehend that this feeling and judgment have never appeared more strongly than in the noblest of our race. I hold by Burke, who wrote ‘ I should like that my dust should mingle with kindred dust ; the good old expression, “ family burying-ground,” has something pleasing in it, at least to *me*.’ Mrs. Stone quotes Lady Murray’s account of the death of her mother, the celebrated Grissell Baillie, which shows that that strong-minded and noble-hearted woman felt the natural desire :—

The next day she called me : gave directions about some few things ; said she wished to be carried home to lie by my father, but that perhaps it would be too much trouble and inconvenience to us at that season, therefore left me to do as I pleased ; but that, in a black purse in her cabinet, I would find money sufficient to do it, which she had kept by her for that use, that whenever it happened it might not straiten us. She added, ‘ I have now no more to say or do :’ tenderly embraced me, and laid down her head upon the pillow, and spoke little after that.

An instance, at once touching and awful, of care for the body after the soul has gone, is furnished by certain well-known lines written by a man not commonly regarded as weak-minded or prejudiced ; and engraved by his direction on the stone that marks his grave. If I am wrong, I am content to go wrong with Shakspeare :

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here :  
Blest be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

The most eloquent exposition I know of the religious aspect of the question, is contained in the concluding sentences of Mr. Melvill's noble sermon on the 'Dying Faith of Joseph.' I believe my readers will thank me for quoting it :—

It is not a Christian thing to die manifesting indifference as to what is done with the body. That body is redeemed : not a particle of its dust but was bought with drops of Christ's precious blood. That body is appointed to a glorious condition ; not a particle of the corruptible but what shall put on incorruption ; of the mortal that shall not assume immortality. The Christian knows this : it is not the part of a Christian to seem unmindful of this. He may, therefore, as he departs, speak of the place where he would wish to be laid. 'Let me sleep,' he may say, 'with my father and my mother, with my wife and my children ; lay me not there, in this distant land, where my dust cannot mingle with its kindred. I would be chimed to my grave by my own village bell, and have my requiem sung where I was baptised into Christ.' Marvel ye at such last words ? Wonder ye that one, whose spirit is just entering the separate state, should have this care for the body which he is about to leave to the worms ? Nay, he is a believer in Jesus as 'the Resurrection and the Life : ' this belief prompts his dying words ; and it shall have to be said of him as of Joseph, that 'by faith,' yea, 'by faith,' he 'gave commandment concerning his bones !'

• If you hold this belief, my reader, you will look at a neglected churchyard with much regret ; and you will highly approve of all endeavours to make the burying-place of the parish as sweet though solemn a spot as can be found within it. I have

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lately read a little tract, by Mr. Hill, the Rural Dean of North Frome, in the Diocese of Hereford, entitled *Thoughts on Churches and Churchyards*, which is well worthy of the attentive perusal of the country clergy. Its purpose is to furnish practical suggestions for the maintenance of decent propriety about the church and churchyard. I am not, at present, concerned with that part of the tract which relates to churches; but I may remark, in passing, that Mr. Hill's views upon that subject appear to me distinguished by great good sense, moderation, and taste. He does not discourage country clergymen, who have but limited means with which to set about ordering and beautifying their churches, by suggesting arrangements on too grand and expensive a scale: on the contrary, he enters with hearty sympathy into all plans for attaining a simple and inexpensive seemliness where more cannot be accomplished. And I think he hits with remarkable felicity the just mean between an undue and excessive regard to the mere externalities of worship, and a puritanical bareness and contempt for material aids; desiring, in the words of Archbishop Bramhall, that 'all be with due moderation, so as neither to render religion sordid and sluttish, nor yet light and garish, but comely and venerable.' Equally judicious, and equally practical, are Mr. Hill's hints as to the ordering of churchyards. He laments that churchyards should ever be found where long, rank

grass, briars, and nettles abound, and where neatly kept walks and graves are wanting. He goes on :—

And yet, how trifling an amount of care and attention would suffice to render neat, pretty, and pleasant to look upon, that which has oftentimes an unpleasing, desolate, and painful aspect. A few sheep occasionally (or better still, the scythe and shears now and then employed), with a trifling attention to the walks, once properly formed and gravelled, will suffice, when the fences are duly kept, to make any churchyard seemly and neat : a little more than this will make it ornamental and instructive.

It is possible that many persons might feel, that flower-beds and shrubberies are not what they would wish to see in a churchyard ; they might think they gave too garden-like and adorned a look to so solemn and sacred a spot ; persons will not all think alike on such a matter : and yet something may be done in this direction with an effect which would please everybody. A few trees of the *arbor vitæ*, the cypress, and the Irish yew, scattered here and there, with firs in the hedge-rows or boundary fences, would be unobjectionable ; while wooden baskets, or boxes, placed by the sides of the walks, and filled in summer with the fuchsia or scarlet geranium, would give our churchyards an exceedingly pretty, and perhaps not unsuitable appearance. Little clumps of snowdrops and primroses might also be planted here and there ; for flowers may fitly spring up, bloom, and fade away, in a spot which so impressively tells us of death and resurrection : and where sheep even are never admitted, all these methods for beautifying a churchyard may be adopted. Shrubs and flowers on and near the graves, as is so universal in Wales, independently of their pretty effect, show a kindly feeling for the memory of those whose bodies rest beneath them ; and how far to be preferred to those enormous and frightful masses of brick or stone which the country mason has, alas, so plentifully supplied !

In the case of a clergyman, a taste for keeping his churchyard in becoming order is just like a taste for keeping his garden and shrubbery in order :

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only let him begin the work, and the taste will grow. There is latent in the mind of every man, unless he be the most untidy and unobservant of the species, a love for well-mown grass and for sharply outlined gravel walks. My brethren, *credite experto*. I did not know that in my soul there was a chord that vibrated responsive to trim gravel and grass, till I tried, and lo! it was there. Try for yourselves; you do not know, perhaps, the strange affinities that exist between material and immaterial nature. If any youthful clergyman shall read these lines, who knows in his conscience that his churchyard-walks are grown up with weeds, and the graves covered with nettles, upon sight hereof let him summon his man-servant, or get a labourer if he have no man-servant. Let him provide a reaping-hook and a large new spade. These implements will suffice in the meantime. Proceed to the churchyard: do not get disheartened at its neglected look, and turn away. Begin at the entrance gate. Let all the nettles and long grass for six feet on either side of the path be carefully cut down and gathered into heaps. Then mark out with a line the boundaries of the first ten yards of the walk. Fall to work and cut the edges with the spade; clear away the weeds and grass that have overspread the walk, also with the spade. In a little time you will feel the fascination of the sharp outline of the walk against the grass on each side. And I repeat, that to the average

human being there is something inexpressibly pleasing in that sharp outline. By the time the ten yards of walk are cut, you will find that you have discovered a new pleasure and a new sensation ; and from that day will date a love of tidy walks and grass ;—and what more is needed to make a pretty churchyard ? The fuchsias, geraniums, and so forth, are of the nature of luxuries, and they will follow in due time : but grass and gravel are the foundation of rustic neatness and tidiness.

As for the treatise on *Burning the Dead*, it is interesting and eloquent, though I am well convinced that its author has been putting forth labour in vain. I remember the consternation with which I read the advertisements announcing its publication. I made sure that it must be the production of one of those wrong-headed individuals who are always proposing preposterous things, without end or meaning. Why on earth should we take to burning the dead ? What is to be gained by recurring to a heathen rite, repudiated by the early Christians, who, as Sir Thomas Browne tells us, ‘ stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, but detested that mode after death ? ’ And wherefore do anything so horrible, and so suggestive of cruelty and sacrilege, as to consign to devouring flames even the unconscious remains of a departed friend ? But after reading the essay, I feel that the author has a great deal to say in defence of his views. I am obliged to acknowledge



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that in many cases important benefits would follow the adoption of urn-sepulture. The question to be considered is, what is the best way to dispose of the mortal part of man when the soul has left it? A first suggestion might be to endeavour to preserve it in the form and features of life; and, accordingly, in many countries and ages, embalming in its various modifications has been resorted to. But all attempts to prevent the human frame from obeying the Creator's law of returning to the elements have miserably failed. And surely it is better a thousand times to 'bury the dead from our sight,' than to preserve a hideous and revolting mockery of the beloved form. The Egyptian mummies every one has heard of; but the most remarkable instance of embalming in recent times is that of the wife of one Martin Van Butchell, who, by her husband's desire, was embalmed in the year 1775, by Dr. William Hunter and Mr. Carpenter, and who may be seen in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London. She was a beautiful woman, and all that skill and science could do were done to preserve her in the appearance of life; but the result is nothing short of shocking and awful. Taking it, then, as admitted, that the body must return to the dust from whence it was taken, the next question is, How? How shall dissolution take place with due respect to the dead, and with least harm to the health and the feelings of the living?

The two fashions which have been universally used are, burial and burning. It has so happened that burial has been associated with Christianity, and burning with heathenism ; but I shall admit at once that the association is not essential, though it would be hard, without very weighty reason indeed, to deviate from the long-remembered ‘earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.’ But such weighty reason the author of this treatise declares to exist. The system of burial, he says, is productive of fearful and numberless evils and dangers to the living. In the neighbourhood of any large burying-place, the air which the living breathe, and the water which they drink, are impregnated with poisons the most destructive of health and life. Even where the damage done to air and water is inappreciable by our senses, it is a predisposing cause of ‘headache, dysentery, sore throat, and low fever ;’ and it keeps all the population around in a condition in which they are the ready prey of all forms of disease. I shall not shock my readers by relating a host of horrible facts, proved by indisputable evidence, which are adduced by the surgeon to show the evils of burial : and all these evils, he maintains, may be escaped by the revival of burning. Four thousand human beings die every hour ; and only by that swift and certain method can the vast mass of decaying matter which, while decaying, gives off the most subtle and searching poisons, be resolved with the elements without

injury or risk to any one. So convinced has the French Government become of the evils of burial that it has patronized and encouraged one M. Bonneau, who proposes that instead of a great city having its neighbouring cemeteries, it should be provided with a building called *The Sarcophagus*, occupying an elevated situation, to which the bodies of rich and poor should be conveyed, and there reduced to ashes by a powerful furnace. And then M. Bonneau, Frenchman all over, suggests that the ashes of our friends might be preserved in a tasteful manner; the funeral urn, containing these ashes, 'replacing on our consoles and mantelpieces the ornaments of bronze clocks and china vases now found there.' Our author, having shown that burning would save us from the dangers of burying, concludes his treatise by a careful description of the manner in which he would carry out the burning process. And certainly his plan contains as little to shock one as may be, in carrying out a system necessarily suggestive of violence and cruelty. There is nothing like the repulsiveness of the Hindoo burning, only half carried out, or even of Mr. Trelawney's furnace for burning poor Shelley. I do not remember to have lately read anything more ghastly and revolting than the entire account of Shelley's cremation. It says much for Mr. Trelawney's nerves, that he was able to look on at it; and it was no wonder that it turned Byron sick, and that Mr.

Leigh Hunt kept beyond the sight of it. I intended to have quoted the passage from Mr. Trelawney's, book, but I really cannot venture to do so. But it is right to say that there were very good reasons for resorting to that melancholy mode of disposing of the poet's remains, and that Mr. Trelawney did all he could to accomplish the burning with efficiency and decency: though the whole story makes one feel the great physical difficulties that stand in the way of carrying out cremation successfully. The advocate of urn-sepulture, however, is quite aware of this, and he proposes to use an apparatus by which they would be entirely overcome. It is only fair to let him speak for himself; and I think the following passage will be read with interest :

On a gentle eminence, surrounded by pleasant grounds, stands a convenient, well-ventilated chapel, with a high spire or steeple. At the entrance, where some of the mourners might prefer to take leave of the body, are chambers for their accommodation. Within the edifice are seats for those who follow the remains to the last: there is also an organ, and a gallery for choristers. In the centre of the chapel, embellished with appropriate emblems and devices, is erected a shrine of marble, somewhat like those which cover the ashes of the great and mighty in our old cathedrals, the openings being filled with prepared plate glass. Within this—a sufficient space intervening—is an inner shrine covered with bright non-radiating metal, and within this again is a covered sarcophagus of tempered fire-clay, with one or more longitudinal slits near the top, extending its whole length. As soon as the body is deposited therein, sheets of flame at an immensely high temperature rush through the long apertures from end to end, and acting as a combination of a modified oxy-hydrogen blowpipe, with the reverberatory furnace, utterly and

completely consume and decompose the body, *in an incredibly short space of time*. Even the large quantity of water it contains is decomposed by the extreme heat, and its elements, instead of retarding, aid combustion, as is the case in fierce conflagrations. The gaseous products of combustion are conveyed away by flues; and means being adopted to consume anything like smoke, all that is observed from the outside is occasionally a quivering transparent ether floating away from the high steeple to mingle with the atmosphere.

At either end of the sarcophagus is a closely-fitting fire-proof door, that farthest from the chapel entrance communicating with a chamber which projects into the chapel and adjoins the end of the shrine. Here are the attendants who, unseen, conduct the operation. The door at the other end of the sarcophagus, with a corresponding opening in the inner and outer shrine, is exactly opposite a slab of marble on which the coffin is deposited when brought into the chapel. The funeral service then commences according to any form decided on. At an appointed signal the end of the coffin, which is placed just within the opening in the shrine, is removed, and the body is drawn rapidly but gently and without exposure into the sarcophagus: the sides of the coffin, constructed for the purpose, collapse; and the wooden box is removed to be burned elsewhere.

Meantime the body is committed to the flames to be consumed, and the words 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' may be appropriately used. The organ peals forth a solemn strain, and a hymn or requiem for the dead is sung. In a few minutes, or even seconds, and without any perceptible noise or commotion, all is over, and nothing but a few pounds or ounces of light ash remains. This is carefully collected by the attendants of the adjoining chamber: a door communicating with the chapel is thrown open; and the relic, enclosed in a vase of glass or other material, is brought in and placed before the mourners, to be finally enshrined in the funeral urn of marble, alabaster, stone, or metal.

Speaking for myself, I must say that I think it would cause a strange feeling in most people to part at the chapel-door with the corpse of one who had

been very dear, and, after a few minutes of horrible suspense, during which they should know that it was burning in a fierce furnace, to see the vessel of white ashes brought back, and be told that *there* was all that was mortal of the departed friend. No doubt it may be weakness and prejudice, but I think that few could divest themselves of the feeling of sacrilegious violence. Better far to lay the brother or sister, tenderly as though still they felt, in the last resting-place, so soft and trim. It soothes *us*, if it does no good to *them*, and the sad change which we know is soon to follow is wrought only by the gentle hand of Nature. And only think of a man pointing to half-a-dozen vases on his mantelpiece, and as many more on his cheffonier, and saying, 'There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest!'

No, no; the thing will never do!

One of the latest examples of burning, in the case of a Christian, is that of Henry Laurens, the first President of the American Congress. In his will he solemnly enjoined upon his children that they should cause his body to be given to the flames. The Emperor Napoleon, when at St. Helena, expressed a similar desire; and said, truly enough, that as for the Resurrection, *that* would be miraculous at all events, and it would be just as easy for the Almighty to accomplish that great end in the case of

burning as in that of burial. And, indeed, the doctrine of the Resurrection is one that it is not wise to scrutinise too minutely—I mean as regards its rationale. It is best to simply hold by the great truth, that ‘this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.’ I presume that it has been shown beyond doubt that the material particles which make up our bodies are in a state of constant flux, the entire physical nature being changed every seven years, so that if all the particles which once entered into the structure of a man of fourscore were reassembled, they would suffice to make seven or eight bodies. And the manner in which it is certain that the mortal part of man is dispersed and assimilated to all the elements furnishes a very striking thought. Bryant has said, truly and beautifully,

All that tread  
The globe, are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom.

And James Montgomery, in a poem of his which is little known, and which is amplified and spoiled in the latest editions of his works, has suggested to us whither the mortal vestiges of these untold millions have gone. It is entitled *Lines to a Molehill in a Churchyard*.

Tell me, thou dust beneath my feet—  
Thou dust that once hadst breath—  
Tell me, how many mortals meet  
In this small hill of death.

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The mole, that scoops with curious toil  
Her subterranean bed,  
Thinks not she ploughs a human soil,  
And mines among the dead.

Yet, whereso'er she turns the ground,  
My kindred earth I see :  
Once every atom of this mound  
Lived, breathed, and felt, like me.

Through all this hillock's crumbling mould  
Once the warm lifeblood ran :  
Here thine original behold,  
And here thy ruins, man !

By wafting winds and flooding rains,  
From ocean, earth, and sky,  
Collected here, the frail remains  
Of slumbering millions lie.

The towers and temples crushed by time,  
Stupendous wrecks, appear  
To me less mournfully sublime  
Than this poor molehill here !

Methinks this dust yet heaves with breath—  
Ten thousand pulses beat ;—  
Tell me, in this small hill of death,  
How many mortals meet !

One idea, you see, beaten out rather thin, and expressed in a great many words, as was the good man's wont. And in these days of the misty and spasmodic school, I owe my readers an apology for presenting them with poetry which they will have no difficulty in understanding.

Amid a great number of particulars as to the burial customs of various nations, we find mention



made of an odd way in which the natives of Thibet dignify their great people. They do not desecrate such by giving them to the earth, but retain a number of sacred dogs to devour them. Not less strange was the fancy of that Englishwoman, a century or two back, who had her husband burnt to ashes, and these ashes reduced to powder, of which she mixed some with all the water she drank, thinking, poor heart-broken creature, that thus she was burying the dear form within her own.

In rare cases I have known of the parson or the churchwarden turning his cow to pasture in the churchyard, to the sad desecration of the place. It appears, however, that worse than this has been done, if we may judge from the following passage quoted by Mrs. Stone :—

1540. Proceedings of the Court of Archdeaconry of Colchester, Colne Wake. Notatur per iconimos dicte ecclesie y<sup>t</sup> the parson mysusithe the churche-yard, for hogis do wrote up graves, and besse lie in the porche, and ther the pavements be broke up and soyle the porche; and ther is so mych catell y<sup>t</sup> usithe the church-yarde, y<sup>t</sup> is more liker a pasture than a halowed place.

It is usual, it appears, in the southern parts of France, to erect in the churchyard a lofty pillar, bearing a large lamp, which throws its light upon the cemetery during the night. The custom began in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Sometimes the *lanterne des morts* was a highly ornamented chapel, built in a circular form, like the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, in which the dead lay exposed to view in the days which preceded their interment : sometimes it was merely a hollow column, ascended by a winding stair inside, or by projections left for the purpose within. It must have been a striking sight when the traveller, through the dark night, saw far away the lonely flame that marked the spot where so many of his fellow-men had completed their journey.

One of the oddest things ever introduced into *Materia Medica* was the celebrated *Mummy Powder*. Egyptian mummies, being broken up and ground into dust, were held of great value as medicine both for external and internal application. Boyle and Bacon unite in commending its virtues : the latter, indeed, venturing to suggest that ‘the mixture of balms that are glutinous’ was the foundation of its power, though common belief held that the virtue was ‘more in the Egyptian than in the spice.’ Even in the seventeenth century mummy was an important article of commerce, and was sold at a great price. One Eastern traveller brought to the Turkey Company six hundred weight of mummy broken into pieces. Adulteration came into play in a manner which would have gratified the *Lancet* commission : the Jews collecting the bodies of executed criminals, filling them with common asphaltum, which cost little, and then drying them in the sun, when they became undistinguishable from the genuine article.

And the maladies which mummy was held to cure are set forth in a list which we commend to the notice of Professor Holloway. It was 'to be taken in decoctions of marjorum, thyme, elder-flower, barley, roses, lentils, jujubes, cummin-seed, carraway, saffron, cassia, parsley, with oxymel, wine, milk, butter, castor, and mulberries.' Sir Thomas Browne, who was a good deal before his age, did not approve of the use of mummy. He says:—

Were the efficacy thereof more clearly made out, we scarce conceive the use thereof allowable in physic : exceeding the barbarities of Cambyzes, and turning old heroes into unworthy potions. Shall Egypt lend out her ancients unto chirurgeons and apothecaries, and Cheops and Psammeticus be weighed unto us for drugs? Shall we eat of Chamnes and Amasis in electuaries and pills, and be cured by cannibal mixtures? Surely such diet is miserable vampirism : and exceeds in horror the black banquet of Domitian, not to be paralleled except in those Arabian feasts wherein ghouls feed horribly.

I need hardly add that the world has come round to the great physician's way of thinking, and that mummy is not included in the pharmacopœia of modern days.

The monumental inscriptions of this country, as a general rule, furnish lamentable proof of the national bad taste. Somehow our peculiar genius seems not to lie in that direction ; and very eminent men, who did most other things well, have signally failed when they tried to produce an epitaph. What with stilted extravagance and bombast on the one side, and profane and irreverent jesting on the other,

our epitaphs, for the most part, would be better away. It was well said by Addison of the inscriptions in Westminster Abbey—‘Some epitaphs are so extravagant that the dead person would blush; and others so excessively modest that they deliver the character of the person departed in Greek and Hebrew, and by that means are not understood once in a twelvemonth.’ And Fuller has hit the characteristics of a fitting epitaph when he said that ‘the shortest, plainest, and truest epitaphs are the best.’ In most cases the safe plan is to give no more than the name and age, and some brief text of Scripture.

Every one knows that epitaphs generally are expressed in such complimentary terms as quite explain the question of the child, who wonderingly enquired where they buried the bad people. Mrs. Stone, however, quotes a remarkably out-spoken one, from a monument in Horselydown Church, in Cumberland. It runs as follows:—

Here lie the bodies  
Of Thomas Bond and Mary his wife.  
She was temperate, chaste, and charitable;  
But  
She was proud, peevish, and passionate.  
She was an affectionate wife and a tender mother;  
But  
Her husband and child, whom she loved,  
Seldom saw her countenance without a disgusting frown,  
While she received visitors whom she despised with an endearing  
smile.

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Her behaviour was discreet towards strangers ;

But

Imprudent in her family.

Abroad her conduct was influenced by good breeding ;

But

At home by ill temper.

And so the epitaph runs on to considerable length, acknowledging the good qualities of the poor woman, but killing each by setting against it some peculiarly unamiable trait. I confess that my feeling is quite turned in her favour by the unmanly assault which her brother (the author of the inscription) has thus made upon the poor dead woman. If you cannot honestly say good of a human being on his grave-stone, then say nothing at all. There are some cases in which an exception may justly be made ; and such a one, I think, was that of the infamous Francis Chartres, who died in 1731. He was buried in Scotland, and at his funeral the populace raised a riot, almost tore his body from the coffin, and threw dead dogs into the grave along with it. Dr. Arbuthnot wrote his epitaph, and here it is :—

Here continueth to rot

The body of Francis Chartres :

Who, with an inflexible constancy,  
and

Inimitable uniformity of life,  
Persisted,

In spite of age and infirmities,  
In the practice of every human vice,  
Excepting prodigality and hypocrisy :

His insatiable avarice exempted him  
from the first,  
His matchless impudence from the  
second.  
Nor was he more singular  
In the undeviating pravity of his  
manners,  
Than successful  
In accumulating wealth :  
For without trade or profession,  
Without trust of public money,  
And without bribeworthy service,  
He acquired, or more properly created,  
A Ministerial Estate : •  
He was the only person of his time  
Who could cheat without the mask of  
honesty, •  
Retain his primeval meanness •  
When possessed of ten thousand a year :  
And having daily deserved the gibbet for  
what he did,  
Was at last condemned for what he  
could not do. •  
Oh ! indignant reader •  
Think not his life useless to mankind !  
Providence connived at his execrable designs,  
To give to after ages  
A conspicuous proof and example  
Of how small estimation is exorbitant  
wealth  
In the sight of God,  
By his bestowing it on the most  
unworthy of all  
mortals.

If one *does* intend to make a verbal assault upon  
any man, it is well to do so in words which  
will sting and cut ; and assuredly Arbuthnot has

succeeded in his laudable intention. The character is justly drawn; and with the change of a very few words, it might correctly be inscribed on the monument of at least one Scotch and one English peer, who have died within the last half century.

There are one or two extreme cases in which it is in good taste, and the effect not without sublimity, to leave a monument with no inscription at all. Of course this can only be when the monument is that of a very great and illustrious man. The pillar erected by Bernadotte at Frederickshall, in memory of Charles the Twelfth, bears not a word; and I believe most people who visit the spot feel that Bernadotte judged well. The rude mass of masonry, standing in the solitary waste, that marks where Howard the philanthropist sleeps, is likewise nameless. And when John Kyrle died in 1724, he was buried in the chancel of the church of Ross in Herefordshire, 'without so much as an inscription.' But the Man of Ross had his best monument in the lifted head and beaming eye of those he left behind him at the mention of his name. He never knew, of course, that the bitter little satirist of Twickenham would melt into unwonted tenderness in telling of all he did, and apologize nobly for his nameless grave:—

And what! no monument, inscription, stone?

His race, his form, his name almost, unknown?

Who builds a church to God, and not to fame,  
Will never mark the marble with his name :  
Go, search it there, where to be born and die,  
Of rich and poor make all the history :  
Enough, that virtue filled the space between,  
Proved, by the ends of being, to have been !\*

The two fine epitaphs written by Ben Jonson are well known. One is on the Countess of Pembroke :—

Underneath this marble hearse,  
Lies the subject of all verse :  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother ;  
Death ! ere thou hast slain another,  
Learned and fair, and good as she,  
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

And the other is the epitaph of a certain unknown Elizabeth :—

Wouldst thou hear what man can say  
In a little ?—reader, stay.

Underneath this stone doth lie  
As much beauty as could die ;  
Which in life did harbour give  
To more virtue than doth live.

If at all she had a fault,  
Leave it buried in this vault :  
One name was Elizabeth,  
The other let it sleep with death :  
Fitter, where it died, to tell,  
Than that it lived at all. Farewell !

\* Most people have heard of the brief epitaph inscribed on a tombstone in the floor of Hereford Cathedral, which inspired one of the sonnets of



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Wordsworth. There is no name, no date, but the single word MISERRIMUS. The lines, written by herself, which are inscribed on the gravestone of Mrs. Hemans, in St. Anne's Church at Dublin, are very beautiful, but too well known to need quotation. And Longfellow, in his charming little poem of *Nuremberg*, has preserved the characteristic word in the epitaph of Albert Dürer :—

*Emigravit* is the inscription on the tombstone where he lies ;  
Dead he is not—but departed—for the artist never dies.

Perhaps some readers may be interested by the following epitaph, written by no less a man than Sir Walter Scott, and inscribed on the stone which covers the grave of a humble heroine whose name his genius has made known all over the world. The grave is in the churchyard of Kirkpatrick-Irongray, a few miles from Dumfries :

This stone was erected  
By the Author of Waverley  
To the memory of  
Helen Walker,  
Who died in the year of God 1791.  
This humble individual  
practised in real life  
the virtues  
with which fiction has invested  
the imaginary character  
of  
Jeanie Deans.  
Refusing the slightest departure  
from veracity  
even to save the life of a sister,

she nevertheless showed her  
kindness and fortitude  
by rescuing her from the severity of the law  
at the expense of personal exertions  
which the time rendered as difficult  
as the motive was laudable. •

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Respect the grave of poverty  
when combined with love of truth  
and dear affection.

Although, of course, it is treasonable to say so, I confess I think this inscription somewhat cumbrous and awkward. The antithesis is not a good one, between the difficulty of Jeanie's 'personal exertions' and the laudableness of the motive which led to them. And there is something not metaphysically correct in the combination described in the closing sentence—the combination of poverty, an outward condition, with truthfulness and affection, two inward characteristics. The only parallel phrase which I remember in literature is one which was used by Mr. Stiggins when he was explaining to Sam Weller what was meant by a moral pocket-handkerchief. 'It's them,' were Mr. Stiggins's words, 'as combines useful instruction with woodcuts.' Poverty might co-exist with, or be associated with, any mental qualities you please, but assuredly it cannot correctly be said to enter into *combination* with any.

As for odd and ridiculous epitaphs, their number is great, and every one has the chief of them at his

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fingers' ends. I shall be content to give two or three, which I am quite sure hardly any of my readers ever heard of before. The following, which may be read on a tombstone in a country churchyard in Ayrshire, appears to me to be unequalled for irreverence. And let critics observe the skilful introduction of the dialogue form, giving the inscription a dramatic effect :—

Wha is it that's lying here ?—  
Robin Wood, ye needna speer.  
Eh Robin, is this you ?  
Ou aye, but I'm deid noo !

The following epitaph was composed by a village poet and wit, not unknown to me in my youth, for a rival poet, one Syme, who had published a volume of verses *On the Times* (not the newspaper).

• Beneath this thistle,  
• Skin, bone, and gristle,  
In Sexton Goudie's keepin' lies,  
Of poet Syme,  
Who fell to rhyme  
(O bards beware !) a sacrifice.

Ask not at all,  
Where flew his saul,  
When of the body death bereft her :  
She, like his rhymes  
Upon the Times,  
Was never worth the speerin' after !

*Speerin'*, I should mention, for the benefit of those ignorant of Lowland Scotch, means asking or inquiring.

It is recorded in history that a certain Mr.

Anderson, who filled the dignified office of Provost of Dundee, died, as even provosts must. It was resolved that a monument should be erected in his memory, and that the inscription upon it should be the joint composition of four of his surviving colleagues in the magistracy. They met to prepare the epitaph; and after much consideration it was resolved that the epitaph should be a rhymed stanza of four lines, of which lines each magistrate should contribute one. The senior accordingly began, and having deeply ruminated he produced the following:—

Here lies Anderson, Provost of Dundee. •

This formed a neat and striking introduction, going (so to speak) to the heart of things at once, but leaving room for subsequent amplification. The second magistrate perceived this, and felt that the idea was such a good one that it ought to be followed up. He therefore produced the line,

Here lies Him, here lies He:

thus repeating in different modifications the same grand thought, after the style which has been adopted by Burke, Chalmers, Melvill, and other great orators. The third magistrate, whose turn had now arrived, felt that the foundation had thus been substantially laid down, and that the time had come to erect upon it a superstructure of reflection, inference, or exclamation. With the simplicity of

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genius he wrote as follows, availing himself of a poet's license to slightly alter the ordinary forms of language—

Hallelujah, Hallelujee !

The epitaph being thus, as it were, rounded and complete, the fourth contributor to it found himself in a difficulty ; wherefore add anything to that which needed and in truth admitted nothing more ? Still the stanza must be completed. What should he do ? He would fall back on the earliest recollections of his youth—he would recur to the very fount and origin of all human knowledge. Seizing his pen, he wrote thus :—

A. B. C. D. E. F. G !

Whoever shall piece together these valuable lines, thus fragmentarily presented, will enter into the feelings of the Town Council, which bestowed a vote of thanks upon their authors, and caused the stanza to be engraven on the worthy provost's monument. I have not myself read it, but am assured it is in existence.

There was something of poor Thomas Hood's morbid taste for the ghastly, and the physically repulsive, in his fancy of spending some time during his last illness in drawing a picture of himself dead in his shroud. In his memoirs, published by his children, you may see the picture, grimly truthful ; and bearing the legend, *He sang the Song of the Shirt.*

You may discover in what he drew, as well as in what he wrote, many indications of the humourist's perverted taste: and no doubt the knowledge that mortal disease was for years doing its work within, led his thoughts oftentimes to what was awaiting himself. He could not walk in an avenue of elm-trees, without fancying that one of them might furnish his coffin. When in his ear, as in Longfellow's, 'the green trees whispered low and mild,' their sound did not carry him back to boyhood, but onward to his grave. He listened, and there arose within

A secret, vague, prophetic fear,  
As though by certain mark  
I knew the fore-ordained tree  
Within whose rugged bark  
This warm and living form shall find  
Its narrow house and dark.

Not but that such thoughts are well in their due time and place. It is very fit that we should all sometimes try to realise distinctly what is meant when each of us repeats words four thousand years old, and says, 'I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' Even with all such remembrances brought home to him by means to which we are not likely to resort, the good priest and martyr Robert Southwell tells us how hard he found it, while in buoyant life, to rightly consider his end. But in perfect cheerfulness and healthfulness of spirit, the human being who knows (so far as man can know) where he is to

rest at last, may oftentimes visit that peaceful spot. It will do him good : It can do him no harm. The hard-wrought man may fitly look upon the soft green turf, some day to be opened for him ; and think to himself, Not yet, I have more to do yet ; but in a little while. Somewhere there is a place appointed for each of us, a place that is waiting for each of us, and that will not be complete till we are there. Well, we rest in the humble trust, that ‘through the grave and gate of death, we shall pass to our joyful resurrection.’ And we turn away now from the churchyard, recalling Bryant’s lines as to its extent :

Yet not to thy eternal resting-place  
Shalt thou retire alone ; nor could’st thou wish  
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down  
With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,  
‘The powerful of the earth, the wise and good,  
Fair forms and hoary seers of ages past,  
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills,  
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun ; the vales,  
Stretching in pensive quietness between ;  
The venerable woods ; rivers that move  
In majesty, and the complaining brooks  
That make the meadows green ; and, poured round all,  
Old ocean’s gray and melancholy waste —  
Are but the solemn decorations all  
Of the Great Tomb of Man!

## CHAPTER IX.

## CONCERNING SUMMER DAYS.

THERE are some people whom all nature helps. They have somehow got the material universe on their side. What they say and do, at least upon important occasions, is so backed up by all the surroundings that it never seems out of keeping with these, and still less ever seems to be contradicted by these.\* When Mr. Midhurst\* read his essay on the *Miseries of Human Life*, he had all the advantage of a gloomy, overcast day. And so the aspect of the external world was to the essay like the accompaniment in music to a song. The accompaniment, of course, has no specific meaning; it says nothing, but it appears to accord and sympathise with the sense conveyed by the song's words. But gloomy hills and skies and woods are to desponding views of life and man, even more than the sympathetic chords, in themselves

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\* See the New Series of *Friends in Council*.



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meaningless. The gloomy world not merely accords with the desponding views, but seems somehow to back them. You are conscious of a great environing Presence standing by and looking on approvingly. From all points in the horizon a voice, soft and undefined, seems to whisper to your heart, *All true, all too true.*

Now, there are human beings who, in the great things they say and do, seldom fail of having this great, vague backing. There are others whom the grand current for the most part sets against. It is part of the great fact of Luck—the indubitable fact that there are men, women, ships, horses, railway-engines, whole railways, which are lucky, and others which are unlucky. I do not believe in the common theory of Luck, but no thoughtful or observant man can deny the fact of it. And in no fashion does it appear more certainly than in this, that in the case of some men cross-accidents are always marring them, and the effect they would fain produce. The system of things is against them. They are not in every case unsuccessful, but whatever success they attain is got by brave fighting against wind and tide. At college they carried off many honours, but no such luck ever befel them as that some wealthy person should offer during their days some special medal for essay or examination, which they would have gained as of course. There was no extra harvest for them to reap : they could do no

more than win all that was to be won. They go to the bar, and they gradually make their way ; but the day never comes on which their leader is suddenly taken ill, and they have the opportunity of earning a brilliant reputation by conducting in his absence a case in which they are thoroughly prepared. They go into the Church, and earn a fair character as preachers ; but the living they would like never becomes vacant, and when they are appointed to preach upon some important occasion, it happens that the ground is a foot deep with snow.

Several years since, on a Sunday in July, I went to afternoon service at a certain church by the sea-shore. The incumbent of that church was a young clergyman of no ordinary talent ; he is a distinguished professor now. It was a day of drenching rain and howling hurricane ; the sky was black, as in mid-winter ; the waves were breaking angry and loud upon the rocks hard by. The weather the previous week had been beautiful ; the weather became beautiful again the next morning. There came just the one gloomy and stormy summer day. The young parson could not foresee the weather. What more fitting subject for a July Sunday than the teachings of the beautiful season which was passing over ? So the text was, *Thou hast made summer* : it was a sermon on summer, and its moral and spiritual lessons. How inconsistent the sermon seemed with everything around ! The outward circumstances

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reduced it to an absurdity. The congregation was diminished to a sixth of its usual number; the atmosphere was charged with a muggy vapour from sloppy garments and dripping umbrellas: and as the preacher spoke, describing vividly (though with the chastened taste of the scholar) blue skies, green leaves, and gentle breezes, ever and anon the storm outside drove the rain in heavy plashes upon the windows, and, looking through them, you could see the black sky and the fast-drifting clouds. I thought to myself, as the preacher went on under the cross influence of these surroundings, Now, I am sure you are in small things an unlucky man. No doubt the like happens to you frequently. You are the kind of man to whom the *Times* fails to come on the morning you specially wish to see it. Your horse falls lame on the morning when you have a long drive before you. Your manservant catches a sore throat, and is unable to go out, just when the visitor comes to whom you wish to show the neighbouring country. I felt for the preacher. I was younger then, but I had seen enough to make me think how Mr. Snarling of the next parish (a very dull preacher, with no power of description) would chuckle over the tale of the summer sermon on the stormy day. That youthful preacher (not Mr. Snarling) had been but a few months in the church, and he probably had not another sermon to give in the unexpected circumstances: he must preach what he had prepared.

He had fallen into error. I formed a resolution never to do the like. I was looking forward then with great enthusiasm to the work of my sacred profession : with enthusiasm which has only grown deeper and warmer through the experience of more than nine years. I resolved that if ever I thought of preaching a summer sermon, I would take care to have an alternative one ready for that day in case of unfavourable weather. I resolved that I would give my summer discourse only if external nature, in her soft luxuriant beauty, looked summer-like : a sweet pervading accompaniment to my poor words, giving them a force and meaning far beyond their own. What talk concerning summer skies is like the sapphire radiance, so distant and pure, looking in through the church windows ? You do not remember how blue and beautiful the sky is, unless when you are looking at it : nature is better than our remembrance of her. What description of a leafy tree equals that noble, soft, massive, luxuriant object which I looked at for half-an-hour yesterday through the window of a little country church, while listening to the sermon of a friend ? Do not think that I was inattentive. I heard the sermon with the greater pleasure and profit for the sight. It is characteristic of the preaching of a really able man, preaching what he himself has felt, that all he says appears (as a general rule) in harmony with all the universe ; while the preaching of a commonplace

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man, giving us from memory mere theological doctrine which has been drilled into him, and which he repeats because he supposes it must be all right, seems inconsistent with all the material universe, or at least quite apart from it. Yet, even listening to that excellent sermon (whose masculine thought was very superior to its somewhat slovenly style), I thought, as I looked at the beautiful tree rising in the silent churchyard—the stately sycamore, so bright green, with the blue sky all around it—how truly John Foster wrote, that when standing in January at the foot of a large oak, and looking at its bare branches, he vainly tried to picture to himself what that tree would be in June. The reality would be far richer and finer than anything he could imagine on the winter day. Who does not know this? The green grass and the bright leaves in spring are far greener (you see when they come back) than you had remembered or imagined; the sunshine is more golden, and the sky more bright. God's works are better and more beautiful than our poor idea of them. Though I have seen them and loved them now for more than thirty summers, I have felt this year, with something of almost surprise, how exquisitely beautiful are summer foliage and summer grass. Here they are again, fresh from God! The summer world is incomparably more beautiful than any imagination could picture it on a dull December day. You did not know on New

Year's day, my reader, how fair a thing the sunshine is. And the commonest things are the most beautiful. Flowers are beautiful : he must be a black-guard who does not love them. Summer seas are beautiful, so exquisitely blue under the blue summer sky. But what can surpass the beauty of green grass and green trees ! Amid such things let me live ; and when I am gone, let green grass grow over me. I would not be buried beneath a stone pavement, not to sleep in the Great Abbey itself.

My summer sermon has never been written, and so has never been preached ; I doubt whether I could make much of the subject, treated as it ought to be treated there. But an essay is a different matter, notwithstanding that a dear, though sarcastic friend says that my essays are merely *sermons played in polka time* ; the thought of sermons, to wit, lightened somewhat by a somewhat lighter fashion of phrase and illustration. And all that has hitherto been said is introductory to remarking, that I stand in fear of what kind of day it may be when my reader shall see this essay, which as yet exists but vaguely in the writer's mind ; and upon four pieces of paper, three large and one small. If your eye lights upon this page on a cold, bleak day ; if it be wet and plashy ; above all, if there be east wind, read no further. Keep this essay for a warm sunshiny day ; it is only then that you will sympathise

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with its author. For amid a dismal, rainy, stormy summer, we have reached fair weather at last ; and this is a lovely sunny summer morning. And what an indescribably beautiful thing is a summer day ! I do not mean merely the hours as they pass over ; the long light ; the sun going up and going down ; but all that one associates with summer days, spent in sweet rural scenes. There is great variety in summer days. There is the warm, bright, still summer day ; when everything seems asleep, and the topmost branches of the tall trees do not stir in the azure air. There is the breezy summer day, when warm breaths wave these topmost branches gently to and fro, and you stand and look at them ; when sportive winds bend the green corn as they swiftly sweep over it ; when the shadows of the clouds pass slowly along the hills. Even the rainy day, if it come with soft summer-like rain, is beautiful. People in town are apt to think of rain as a mere nuisance ; the chief good it does there is to water the streets more generally and thoroughly than usual ; a rainy day in town is equivalent to a bad day ; but in the country, if you possess even the smallest portion of the earth, you learn to rejoice in the rain. You go out in it ; you walk about and enjoy the sight of the grass momentarily growing greener ; of the trees looking refreshed, and the evergreens gleaming, the gravel walks so free from dust, and the roads watered so as to render them beautifully compact, but not at all

sloppy or muddy ; summer rain never renders well-made country roads sloppy or muddy. There is a pleasure in thinking that you have got far ahead of man or machine ; and you heartily despise a watering-cart, while enjoying a soft summer shower. And after the shower is over, what fragrance is diffused through the country air ; every tree and shrub has an odour which a summer shower brings out, and which senses trained to perception will perceive. And then, how full the trees and woods are of the singing of birds ! But there is one feeling which, if you live in the country, is common to all pleasant summer days, but particularly to sunshiny ones ; it is that you are doing injustice to nature, that you are losing a great deal, if you do not stay almost constantly in the open air. You come to grudge every half hour that you are within doors, or busied with things that call you off from observing and thinking of all the beauty that is around you everywhere. That fair scene—trees, grass, flowers, sky, sunshine, is there to be looked at and enjoyed ; it seems wrong, that with such a picture passing on before your eyes, your eyes should be turned upon anything else. Work, especially mental work, is always painful ; always a thing you would shrink from if you could ; but how strongly you shrink from it on a beautiful summer morning ! On a gloomy winter day you can walk with comparative willingness into your study after breakfast, and



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spread out your paper, and begin to write your sermon. For although writing the sermon is undoubtedly an effort ; and although all sustained effort partakes of the nature of pain ; and although pain can never be pleasant ; still, after all, apart from other reasons which impel you to your work, you cannot but feel that really if you were to turn away from your task of writing, there is nothing to which you could take that you would enjoy very much more than itself. And even on the fairest summer morning, you can, if you are living in town, take to your task with comparative ease. Somehow, in town, the weather is farther off from you ; it does not pervade all the house, as it does in the country : you have not windows that open into the garden : through which you see green trees and grass every time you look up ; and through which you can in a minute, without the least change of dress, pass into the verdant scene. There is all the difference in the world, between the shadiest and greenest public garden or park even within a hundred yards of your door : and the green shady little spot that comes up to your very window. The former is no very great temptation to the busy scholar of rural tastes ; the latter is almost irresistible. A hundred yards are a long way to go, with purpose prepossession of enjoying something so simple as the green earth. After having walked even a hundred yards, you feel that you need a more definite aim. And the grass

and trees seem very far away, if you see them at the end of a vista of washing your hands, and putting on another coat and other boots, and still more of putting on gloves and a hat. Give me the little patch of grass, the three or four shady trees, the quiet corner of the shrubbery, that comes up to the study window, and which you can reach without even the formality of passing through the hall and out by the front door. If you wish to enjoy nature in the summer-time, you must attend to all these little things. What stout old gentleman but knows that when he is seated snugly in his easy chair by the winter evening fireside, he would take up and read many pages in a volume which lay within reach of his arm, though he would do without the volume if in order to get it he had to take the slight trouble of rising from his chair and walking to a table half a dozen yards off? Even so must nature be brought within easy reach of even the true lover of nature; otherwise on a hundred occasions, all sorts of little, fanciful hindrances will stand between him and her habitual appreciation. A very small thing may prevent your doing a thing which you even wish to do; but which you do not wish with any special excitement, and which you may do at any time. I daresay some reader would have written months since to the friend in India to whom he promised faithfully to write frequently, but that when he sat down once or twice to write, and pulled out his

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paper drawer, he found that all the thin Indian paper was done. And so the upshot is, that the friend has been a year out ; and you have never written to him at all.

But to return to the point from which this deviation proceeded, I repeat, that on a fine summer morning in the country, it is excessively difficult to take to your work. Apart from the repellent influence which is in work itself, you think that you will miss so much. You go out after breakfast (with a wide-awake hat, and no gloves) into the fresh atmosphere. You walk round the garden. You look particularly at the more eminent roses, and the largest trees. You go to the stable-yard, and see what is doing there. There are twenty things to think of: numberless little directions to give. You see a weedy corner, and *that* must not be suffered : you see a long spray of a climbing rose that needs training. You look into the corn-chest : the corn is almost finished. You have the fact impressed upon you that the old potatoes are nearly done, and the new ones hardly ready for use. These things partake of the nature of care ; if you do not feel very well you will regard them as worries. But it is no care nor worry to walk down to your gate, to lean upon it, and to look at the outline of the hills : nor to go out with your little children, and walk slowly along the country lane outside your gate, relating for the hundredth time the legend of

the renowned giant-killer, or the enchanted horse that flew through the air ; to walk on till you come to the bridge, and there sit down, and throw in stones for your dog to dive after, while various shouts (very loud to come from such little mouths) applaud his success. How crystal-clear the water of the river ! It is six feet deep, yet you may see every pebble of its bed. An undefined laziness possesses you. You would like to sit here, and look, and think, all day. But of course you will not give in to the temptation. Slowly you return to your door : unwillingly you enter it : reluctantly you take to your work. Until you have got somewhat into the spirit of your task, you cannot help looking sometimes at the roses which frame your window, and the green hill you see through it, with white sheep. And even when you have got your mind under control, and the lines flow more willingly from your pen, you cannot but look out occasionally into the sunshiny, shady corner in your view, and think you should be there. And when the prescribed pages are at length completed, how delightful to lock them up, and be off into the air again ! You are far happier now than you were in the morning. The shadow of your work was upon you then : now you may with a pleased conscience, and under no sense of pressure, saunter about, and enjoy your little domain. Many things have been accomplished since you went indoors. The weeds are gone from

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the corner ; the spray of the rose has been trained. The potato-beds have been examined : the potatoes will be all ready in two days more. Sit down in the shade, warm yet cool, of a great tree. Now is the time to read the *Saturday Review*, especially the article that pitches into you. What do you care for it? I don't mean that you despise it : I mean that it causes you no feeling but one of amusement and pleasure. You feel that it is written by a clever man and a gentleman : you know that there is not a vestige of malice in it. You would like to shake hands with the writer, and to thank him for various useful hints. As for reviewing which is truly malignant—that which deals in intentional misrepresentation and coarse abuse—it is practically unknown in respectable periodicals. And wherever you may find it (as you sometimes may) you ought never to be angry with the man who did it : you ought to be sorry for him. Depend upon it, the poor fellow is in bad health or in low spirits : no one but a man who is really unhappy himself will deliberately set himself to annoy any one else. It is the misery, anxiety, poverty, which are wringing the man's heart, that make their pitiful moan in that bitter article. Make the poor man better off, and he will be better natured.

And so, my friend, now that our task is finished, let us go out in this kindly temper to enjoy the summer day. But you must first assure your mind

that your work is really finished. You cannot thus simply enjoy the summer day, if you have a latent feeling rankling at your heart that you are neglecting something that you ought to do. The little jar of your moral being caused by such a feeling, will be like the horse-hair shirt, will be like the peas in the pilgrim's shoes. So, clerical reader, after you have written your allotted pages of sermon, and answered your few letters, turn to your tablet-diary, or whatever contrivance you have for suggesting to your memory the work you have to do. If you have marked down some mere call to make, *that* may fairly enough be postponed on this hot day. But look at your list of sick, and see when you visited each last, and consider whether there be any you ought to visit to-day. And if there be, never mind though the heat be sweltering and the roads dusty and shadeless: never mind though the poor old man or woman lives five miles off, and though your horse is lame: get ready, and walk away as slowly as you can, and do your duty. You are not the reader I want: you are not the man with whom I wish to think of summer days: if you could in the least enjoy the afternoon, or have the faintest pleasure in your roses and your grass, with the thought of that neglected work hanging over you. And though you may return four hours hence, fagged and jaded, you will sit with a pleased heart down to dinner, and you will welcome the twilight when it

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comes, with the cheerful sense of duty done and temptation resisted. But upon my ideal summer day, I suppose that after looking over your sick-list, and all your memoranda, you find that there is nothing to do that need take you to-day beyond your own little realm. And so, with the delightful sense of leisure to breathe and think, you walk forth into the green shade to spend the summer afternoon. Bring with you two or three books : bring the *Times* that came that morning : you will not read much, but it is pleasant to know that you may read if you choose : and then sit down upon a garden-seat, and think and feel. Do you not feel, my friend of even five-and-thirty, that there is music yet in the mention of summer days ? Well, enjoy that music now, and the vague associations which are summoned up by the name. Do not put off the enjoyment of these things to some other day. You will never have more time, nor better opportunity. The little worries of the present cease to sting in the pensive languor of the season. Enjoy the sunshine and the leaves while they last : they will not last long. Grasp the day and hold it and rejoice in it : some time soon you will find of a sudden that the summer time has passed away. You come to yourself, and find it is December. The earth seems to pause in its orbit in the dreary winter days : it hurries at express speed through summer. You wish you could put on a break, and make time go on more slowly. Well,

watch the sandgrains as they pass. Remark the several minutes, yet without making it a task to do so. As you sit there, you will think of old summer days long ago : of green leaves long since faded : of sunsets gone. Well, each had its turn : the present has nothing more. And let us think of the past without being lackadaisical. Look now at your own little children at play : *that* sight will revive your flagging interest in life. Look at the soft turf, feel the gentle air : these things are present now. What a contrast to the hard, repellent earth of winter ! I think of it like the difference between the man of sternly logical mind, and the genial, kindly man with both head and heart ! I take it for granted that you agree with me in holding such to be the true type of man. Not but what some people are proud of being all head and no heart. There is no flummery about *them*. It is stern, severe sense and principle. Well, my friends, say I to such, you are (in a moral sense) deficient of a member. Fancy a mortal hopping through creation, and boasting that he was born with only one leg ! Or even if you have a little of the kindly element, but very little when compared with the logical, you have not much to boast of. Your case is analogous to that of the man who has two legs indeed, but one of them a great deal longer than the other.

It is pleasanter to spend the summer days in an



inland country place than by the seaside. The sea is too glaring in sunshiny weather ; the prospects are too extensive. It wearies eyes worn by much writing and reading to look at distant hills across the water. The true locality in which to enjoy the summer time is a richly-wooded country, where you have hedges and hedge-rows, and clumps of trees everywhere: where objects for the most part are near to you ; and, above all, are green. It is pleasant to live in a district where the roads are not great broad highways, in whose centre you feel as if you were condemned to traverse a strip of arid desert stretching through the landscape ; and where any carriage short of a four-in-hand looks so insignificantly small. Give me country lanes: so narrow that their glare does not pain the eye upon even the sunniest day : so narrow that the eye without an effort takes in the green hedges and fields on either side as you drive or walk along.

And now, looking away mentally from this cool shady verdure amid which we are sitting, let us think of summer days elsewhere. Let us think of them listlessly, that we may the more enjoy the quiet here: as a child on a frosty winter night, snug in his little bed, puts out a foot for a moment into the chilly expanse of sheet that stretches away from the warm nest in which he lies, and then pulls it swiftly back again, enjoying the cosy warmth the more for this little reminder of the bitter chill.

Here, where the air is cool, pure, and soft, let us think of a hoarding round some old house which the labourers are pulling down, amid clouds of the white, blinding, parching dust of lime, on a sultry summer day. I can hardly think of any human position as worse, if not intended directly as a position of torture. I picture, too, a crowded wharf on a river in a great town, with ships lying alongside. There is a roar of passing drays, a cracking of draymen's whips, a howling of the draymen. There is hot sunshine; there are clouds of dust; and I see several poor fellows wheeling heavy casks in barrows up a narrow plank into a ship. Their faces are red and puffy with the exertion: their hair is dripping. Ah, the summer day is hard upon these poor fellows! But it would be pleasant to-day to drive a locomotive engine through a fine agricultural country, particularly if one were driving an express train, and so were not worried by perpetual stoppages. I have often thought that I should like to be an engine-driver. Should any revolution or convulsion destroy the Church, it is to that field of industry that I should devote my energies. I should stipulate not to drive luggage-trains; and if I had to begin with third-class passenger-trains, I have no doubt that in a few months, by dint of great punctuality and carefulness, and by having my engine always beautifully clean and bright, I should be promoted to the

express. There was a time when driving a locomotive was not so pleasant as now. In departed days, when the writer was wont to stand upon the foot-plates, through the kindness of engine-driving friends now far away, there was a difficulty in looking out ahead: the current of air was so tremendous, and particles of dust were driven so viciously into one's eyes. But advancing civilization has removed that disadvantage. A snug shelter is now provided for the driver: an iron partition arises before him, with two panes of glass through which to look out. The result is that he can maintain a far more effectual look-out; and that he is in great measure protected from wind and weather. Yes, it would be pleasant to be an engine-driver, especially on such a day as this. Pleasant to look at the great train of carriages standing in the station before starting: to see the piles of luggage going up through the exertions of hot porters: to see the numbers of passengers, old and young, cool and flurried, with their wraps, their newspapers, their books, at length arranged in the soft, roomy interiors; and then the sense of power, when by the touch of a couple of fingers upon the lever, you make the whole mass of luggage, of life, of human interests and cares, start gently into motion; till, gathering speed as it goes, it tears through the green stillness of the summer noon, amid daisied fields, through little woody dells, through clumps of great forest trees, within sight of

quiet old manor houses, across little noisy brooks and fair broad rivers, beside churchyard walls and gray ivied churches, alongside of roads where you see the pretty phaeton, the lordly coach, the lumbering waggon, and get glimpses that suggest a whole picture of the little life of numbers of your fellow-men, each with heart and mind and concerns and fears very like your own. Yes, my friend, if you rejoice in fair scenery, if you sympathise with all modes of human life—if you have some little turn for mechanics, for neatness and accuracy, for that which faithfully does the work it was made to do, and neither less nor more : retain it in your mind as an ultimate end, that you may one day drive a locomotive engine. You need not of necessity become greasy of aspect ; neither need you become black. I never have known more tidy, neat, accurate, intelligent, sharp, punctual, responsible, God-fearing, and truly respectable men, than certain engine-drivers.

Remember the engine must be a locomotive engine. Your taste for scenery and life will not be gratified by employment on a stationary one. And it is fearfully hot work on a summer day to take charge of a stationary steam-engine ; while (perhaps you would not think it) to drive a locomotive is perfectly cool work. You never feel, in that rapid motion, the raging flame that is doing its work so near you. The driver of the express train may be a man of large sympathies, of cheerful heart, of tolerant

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views ; the man in charge of the engine of a coal-pit or factory, even of a steam-ship, is apt to acquire contracted ways of thinking, and to become somewhat cynical and gloomy in his ideas as to the possible amelioration of society. It cannot be a pleasing employment, one would think, on a day like this, to sit and watch a great engine fire, and mend it when needful. *That* occupation would not be healthful, either to mind or body. I dare say you remember the striking and beautiful description in Mr. Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*, of a man who had watched and fed a furnace-fire for years, till he had come to think of it as a living being. The fire was older than he was ; it had never gone out since before he was born. I can imagine, perfectly well, what kind of effect such a mode of life would have had on myself. And very few readers are likely to have within themselves an intellectual and moral fibre of bent and nature so determined, that they are not what they are, mainly through the influence of the external circumstances which have been acting upon them all through life. Did you ever think to yourself that you would like to make trial for a few days' space, of certain modes of life very different from your own, and very different from each other ? I have done so many a time. And a lazy summer afternoon here in the green shade is the time to try and picture out such. Think of being to-day in a stifling counting-house in the hot

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bustling town. I had been especially interested in a glazed closet which I have seen in a certain immensely large and very crowded shop in a certain beautiful city. It is a sort of little office partitioned off from the shop : it has a sloping table, with three or four huge books bound in parchment. There is a ceaseless bustle, crush, and hum of talking outside ; and inside there are clerks sitting writing, and receiving money through little pigeon-holes. I should like to sit for two or three days in a corner of that little retreat ; and to write a sermon there. It would be curious to sit there to-day in the shadow, and to see the warm sunbeams only outside through a distant window, resting on sloping roofs. If one did not get seasick, there would be something fresh in a summer day at sea. It is always cool and breezy there, at least in these latitudes, on the warmest day. Above all there is no dust. Think of the luxurious cabin of a fine yacht to-day. Deep cushions ; rich curtains ; no tremour of machinery ; flowers, books, carpets inches thick ; and through the windows, dim hills and blue sea. Then flying away in spirit, let us go to-day (only in imagination) into the Courts of Law at Westminster. The atmosphere on a summer day in these scenes is always hot and choky. There is a suggestion of summer time in the sunshine through the dusty lanterns in the roofs. Thinking of these courts, and of all their belongings and associations, here on this day, is like the child

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already mentioned when he puts his foot into a very cold corner of his bed, that he may pull it back with special sense of what a blessing it is that he is not bodily in that very cold corner. Yes, let us enjoy this spot where we are, the more keenly, for thinking of the very last place in this world where we should like to-day to be. I went lately (on a bright day in May) to revive old remembrances of Westminster Hall. The judges of the present time are very able and incorruptible men : but they are much uglier than the judges I remember in my youth. Several of them, in their peculiar attire, hardly looked like human beings. Almost all wore wigs a great deal too large for them ; I mean much too thick and massive. The Queen's Counsel, for the most part, seemed much younger than they used to be ; but I was aware that this phenomenon arose from the fact that I myself was older. And various barristers, who fifteen years since were handsome, smooth-faced young men, had now a complexion rough as a nutmeg-grater, and red with that unhealthy colour which is produced by long hours in a poisonous atmosphere. The Courts at Westminster, for cramped space and utter absence of ventilation, are nothing short of a disgrace to a civilised nation. But the most painful reflection which they suggest to a man with a little knowledge of the practical working of law, is, how vainly human law strives to do justice. There, on the benches of the

various Courts, you have a number of the most able and honest men in Britain : skilled by long practice to distinguish between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood ; and yet, in ~~five~~ cases out of six that come before them, they signally fail of redressing the wrongs brought before them. Unhappily, in the nature of things, much delay must occur in all legal procedure ; and further, the machinery of the law cannot be set in motion unless at very considerable expense. Now, every one knows that delay in gaining a legal decision of a debated question, very often amounts to a decision against both parties. What enjoyment of the summer days has the harassed suitor, waiting in nervous anxiety for the judgment or the verdict which may be his ruin ? For very small things may be the ruin of many men. A few pounds to be paid may dip an honest man's head under water for years, or for life. But the great evil of the law, after all, is, that it costs so much. I am aware that this may be nobody's fault ; it may be a vice inherent in the nature of things. Still, where the matter in question is of no very great amount, it is a fact that makes the wise man willing rather to take injustice than to go to law. A man meets with an injury ; he sustains some wrong. He brings his action ; the jury give him ten or twenty pounds damages. The jury fancy that this sum will make him amends for what he has lost or suffered ; they fancy that of course he will



get this sum. What would the jury think if told that he will never get a penny of it? It will all go (and probably a good deal more) for extra costs; that is, the costs the winning party will have to pay his own attorney, besides the costs in the cause which the losing party has to pay. No one profits pecuniarily by that verdict or that trial, except the lawyers on either side. And does it not reduce the administration of justice to an absurdity, to think that in the majority of cases, the decision, no matter on which side, does no good to the man in whose favour it is given?

Another thing which makes the courts of law a sad sight is, that probably in no scene in human affairs are disappointment and success set in so sharp contrast—brought so close together. There, on the bench, dignified, keen, always kind and polite (for the days of bullying have gone by), sits the Chief Justice—a peer (if he pleases to be one)—a great, distinguished, successful man; his kindred all proud of him. And there, only a few yards off, sharp-featured, desponding, soured, sits poor Mr. Briefless, a disappointed man, living in lonely chambers in the Temple: a hermit in the great wilderness of London; in short, a total failure in life. Very likely he absurdly over-estimates his talents, and what he could have done if he had had the chance; but it is at least possible that he may have in him the genius of another Follett, wasting sadly and uselessly away.

Now, of course, in all professions, and all walks of life, there are success and failure ; but there is none, I think, in which poor failure must bear so keenly the trial of being daily and closely set in contrast with flushed success. Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown were rival suitors for the hand of Miss Jones ; Mr. Smith succeeded, and Mr. Brown failed ; but though Mr. Brown feels his mortification severely even as things are, it would be a great deal worse if he were compelled to follow at a hundred yards' distance Mr. Smith and Miss Jones in their moonlight walks, and contemplate their happiness ; to be present when they are married, and daily to attend them throughout their marriage excursion. Or some one else gets the bishopric you wished for ; but you are not obliged daily to contemplate the cathedral and the palace which you had hoped to call your own. In most cases in this world failure may look away from the success which makes its eyes sore and its heart heavy. You try to have a kindly feeling towards the man who succeeded where you failed, and in time you have it ; but just at first you would not have liked to have had ever before you the visible manifestation of his success and your failure. You must have a very sweet nature, and (let me say it) much help from a certain high Quarter, if, without the least envy or jealousy, genially and unsoured, you can daily look upon the man who, without deservng to beat you, actually

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did beat you ;—at least while the wound is fresh.

And while talking of disappointment and success in courts of law, let me remark, that petty success sometimes produces, in vulgar natures, manifestations which are inexpressibly disgusting. Did you ever remark the exultation of some low attorney when he had succeeded in snapping a verdict in some contemptible case which he had taken up and carried on upon speculation ? I have witnessed such a thing, and cannot but say that it appeared to me one of the most revolting and disgusting phases which it is possible that human nature should assume. I think I see the dirty, oily-looking animal, at once servile and insolent, with trickery and rascality in every line of his countenance, rubbing his hands in the hour of his triumph, and bustling about to make immediate preparation for availing himself of it. And following him, also sneakily exulting, I see an object more dirty, more oily-looking, than the low attorney ; it is the low attorney's clerk. And on such an occasion, glancing at the bench, when the judgment-seat was occupied by a judge who had not yet learned never to look as if he thought or felt anything in particular, I have discerned upon the judicial countenance an expression of disgust as deep as my own.

Pleasanter scenes come up this afternoon with

the mention of summer days. I see depths of wood, where all the light is coolly green, and the rippling brook is crystal clear. I see vistas through pines, like cathedral vaults ; the space enclosed looks on a sunshiny day almost black, and a bit of bright blue sky at the end of each is framed by the trees into the likeness of a Gothic window. I see walls of gray rock on either side of a river, noisy and brawling in winter time, but now quiet and low. For two or three miles the walls of rock stretch onward ; there are thick woods above them, and here and there a sunny field : masses of ivy clothe the rock in places ; long sprays of ivy hang over. I walk on in thought till I reach the opening of the glen ; here a green bank slopes upward from a dark pool below, and there is a fair stretch of champaign country beyond the river ; on the summit of the green bank, on this side, mouldering, gray, ivied, lonely, stand the ruins of the monastery, which has kept its place here for seven hundred years. I see the sky-framing eastern window, its tracery gone. There are masses of large daisies varying the sward, and the sweet fragrance of young clover is diffused through all the air. I turn aside, and walk through lines of rose-trees in their summer perfection. I hear the drowsy hum of the laden bees. Suddenly it is the twilight, the long twilight of Scotland, which would sometimes serve you to read by at eleven o'clock at night. The crimson flush has

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faded from the bosom of the river ; if you are alone, its murmur begins to turn to a moan ; the white stones of the churchyard look spectral through the trees. I think of poor Doctor Adam, the great Scotch schoolmaster of the last century, the teacher of Sir Walter Scott, and his last words when the shadow of death was falling deeper—‘ It grows dark, boys, you may go.’ Then, with the professional bias, I go to a certain beautiful promise which the deepening twilight seldom fails to suggest to me ; a promise which tells us how the Christian’s day shall end, how the day of life might be somewhat overcast and dreary, but light should come on the darkened way at last. ‘ It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night ; but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.’ I think of various senses in which it might be shown that these words speak truly : in which its great principle holds good, that signal blessing shall come when it is needed most and expected least ; but I think mainly how, sometimes, at the close of the chequered and sober day, the Better Sun has broken through the clouds, and made the flaming west all purple and gold. I think how always the purer light comes, if not in this world, then in a better. Bowing his head to pass under the dark portal, the Christian lifts it on the other side, in the presence and the light of God. I

think how you and I, my reader, may perhaps have stood in the chamber of death, and seen in the horizon the summer sun in glory going down. But it is only to us who remain that the evening darkness is growing—only for us that the sun is going down. Look on the sleeping features, and think, ‘Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw herself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.’ And then, my reader, tell me—as the evening falls on you, but not on him; as the shadows deepen on you, but not on him; as the darkness gathers on you, but not on him—if, in sober reality, the glorious promise has not found its perfect fulfilment, that ‘at the evening time there shall be light!’

Every one knows that Summer Days dispose one to a certain listlessly meditative mood. In cold weather, out of doors at least, you must move about actively; it is only by the evening fireside, watching the dancing shadows, that you have glimpses of this not wholly unprofitable condition of mind. In summer-time you sometimes feel disposed to stand and look for a good while at the top of a large tree, gently waving about in the blue sky. You begin by thinking it would be curious to be up there: but there is no thought or speculation, moral, political, or religious, which may not come at the end of the

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train started by the loftiest branches of the great beech. You are able to sit for a considerable space in front of an ivied wall, and think out your sermon for Sunday as you look at the dark leaves in the sun. Above all, it is soothing and suggestive to look from a height at the soft outline of distant hills of modest elevation ; and to see, between yourself and them, many farm-houses and many little cottages dotted here and there. There, under your eye, how much of life, and of the interests of life, is going on ! Looking at such things, you muse, in a vague, desultory way. I wonder whether when ordinary folk profess to be thinking, musing, or meditating, they are really thinking connectedly or to any purpose. I daresay the truth is they have (so to speak) given the mind its head ; laid the reins of the will off the mind's neck ; and are letting it go on and about in a wayward, interrupted, odd, semi-conscious way. They are not holding onward on any track of thought. I believe that commonplace human beings can only get their ideas upon any subject into shape and order by writing them down, or (at least) expressing them in words to some one besides themselves. You have a walk of an hour before you : you resolve that you will see your way through some perplexed matter as you walk along ; your mind is really running upon it all the way : but when you have got within a hundred yards of your journey's end, you find with a start that you

have made no progress at all : you are as far as ever from seeing what to think or do. With most people, to *meditate* means to approach to *doing nothing at all* as closely as in the nature of humanity it is possible to do so. And in this sense of it, summer days, after your work is over, are the time for meditation. So, indeed, are quiet days of autumn : so the evening generally, when it is not cold. ‘Isaac went out to meditate in the field, at the eventide.’ Perhaps he thought of the progress of his crops, his flocks, his affairs : perhaps he thought of his expected wife : most probably he thought of nothing in particular ; for four thousand years have left human nature in its essence the self-same thing. It would be miserable work to moon through life, never thinking except in this listless, purposeless way : but after hard work, when you feel the rest has been fairly earned, it is very delightful on such a day and in such a scene as this, to sit down and muse. The analogy which suggests itself to me is that of a carriage-horse, long constrained to keep to the even track along hard dusty roads, drawing a heavy burden ; now turned free into a cool green field to wander, and feed, and roll about untrammelled. Even so does the mind, weary of consecutive thinking—of thinking in the track and thinking with a purpose—expatiate in the license of aimless meditation.

There are various questions which may fitly be



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thought\*of in the listlessness of this summer day. They are questions the consideration of which does not much excite ; questions to which you do not very much mind whether you get an answer or no. I have been thinking for a little while, since I finished the last paragraph, of this point : Whether that clergyman, undertaking the charge of some important church, is best equipped for his duty, who has a great many sermons carefully written and laid up in a box, ready to come out when needed : or that other clergyman, who has very few sermons fully written out, but who has spent great pains in disciplining his mind into that state in which it shall always be able to produce good material. Which of these has made best progress towards the end of being a good and efficient preacher ? Give me, I should say, on the whole, the solid material stock, rather than the trained mind. I look with a curious feeling upon certain very popular preachers, who preach entirely *extempore* : who make a few notes of their skeleton of thought ; but trust for the words and even for the illustrations to the inspiration of the moment. They go on boldly : but their path crumbles away behind them as they advance. Their minds are in splendid working order : they turn off admirable work Sunday by Sunday : and while mind and nervous system keep their spring, that admirable work may be counted on almost with certainty. They have Fortunio's purse : they can always put

their hand upon the sovereigns they need : but they have no hoard accumulated which they might draw from, should the purse some day fail. And remembering how much the success of the extempore speaker depends upon the mood of the moment : remembering what little things, mental and physical, may mar and warp the intellectual machine for the moment : remembering how entirely successful extempore speaking founds on perfect confidence and presence of mind : remembering how as one grows older the nervous system may get shaken and even broken down : remembering how the train of thought which your mind has produced melts away from you unless you preserve a record of it (for I am persuaded that to many men that which they themselves have written looks before very long as strange and new as that produced by another mind) : remembering these things, I say to myself, and to you if you choose to listen : Write sermons diligently : write them week by week, and always do your very best : never make up your mind that this one shall be a third-rate affair, just to get the Sunday over ; and thus accumulate material for use in days when thoughts will not come so readily, and when the hand must write tremblingly and slow. Don't be misled by any clap-trap about the finer thing being to have the mental machine always equal to its task. You cannot have *that*. The mind is a wayward, capricious thing. The engine which did its sixty miles an hour

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to-day, may be depended on (barring accident) to do as much to-morrow. But it is by no means certain that because you wrote your ten or twenty pages to-day, you will be able to do the like on another day. What educated man does not know, that when he sits down to his desk after breakfast, it is quite uncertain whether he will accomplish an ordinary task, or a double task, or a quadruple one? Dogged determination may make sure, on almost every day, of a decent amount of produced material: but the quality varies vastly, and the quantity which the same degree and continuance of strain will produce is not *à priori* to be calculated. And a spinning-jenny will day by day produce thread of uniform quality: but a very clever man, by very great labour, will on some days write miserable rubbish. And no one will feel *that* more bitterly than himself.

I pass from thinking of these things to a matter somewhat connected with them. Is it because preachers now-a-days shrink from the labour of writing sermons for themselves, or is it because they distrust the quality of what they can themselves produce, that shameless plagiarism is becoming so common? One cannot but reflect, thus lazily inclined upon a summer day, what an amount of painful labour would be saved one if, instead of toiling to see the way through a subject, and then to set out one's views in an interesting and (if possible) an impressive manner, one had simply to go to the

volumes of Mr. Melvill or Bishop Wilberforce or Dean Trench; or, if your taste be of a different order, to those of Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Punshon, or Mr. Stowell Brown—and copy out what you want. The manual labour might be considerable—for one blessing of original composition is, that it makes you insensible to the mere mechanical labour of writing—but the intellectual saving would be tremendous. I say nothing of the moral deterioration. I say nothing as to what a mean, contemptible pick-pocket, what a jackdaw in peacock's feathers, you will feel yourself. There is no kind of dishonesty which ought to be exposed more unsparingly. Whenever I hear a sermon preached which has been stolen, I shall make a point of informing every one who knows the delinquent. Let him get the credit which is his due. I have not read many published sermons, and I seldom hear any one preach except myself; so that I do not speak from personal knowledge of the fact alleged by many, that there never was a period when this paltry lying and cheating was so prevalent. But five or six times within the last nine years I have listened to sermons in which there was not merely a manifest appropriation of thoughts, which the preacher had never digested or made his own, but which were stolen word for word; and I have been told by friends in whom I have implicit confidence, of instances twice five or six. Generally, this dishonesty is practised by frightful block-

heads, whose sole object perhaps is to get decently through a task for which they feel themselves unfit ; but it is much more irritating to find men of considerable talent, and of more than considerable popularity, practising it in a very gross degree. And it is curious how such dishonest persons gain in hardihood as they go on. Either because they really escape detection, or because no one tells them that they have been detected, they come at length to parade themselves in their swindled finery upon the most public occasions. I do believe that, like the liar who has told his story so long that he has come to believe it at last, there are persons who have stolen the thoughts of others so often and so long, that they hardly remember that they are thieves. And in two or three cases in which I put the matter to the proof, by speaking to the thief of the characteristics of the stolen composition, I found him quite prepared to carry out his roguery to the utmost, by talking of the trouble it had cost him to write Dr. Newman's or Mr. Logan's discourse. 'Quite a simple matter—no trouble ; scribbled off on Saturday afternoon,' said, in my hearing, a man who had preached an elaborate sermon by an eminent Anglican divine. The reply was irresistible : 'Well, if it cost *you* little trouble, I am sure it cost Mr. Melvill a great deal.'

I am speaking, you remark, of those despicable individuals who falsely pass off as their own composition what they have stolen from some one else. I

do not allude to such as follow the advice of Southey, and preach sermons which they honestly declare are not their own. I can see something that might be said in favour of the young inexperienced divine availing himself of the experience of others. Of course, you may take the ground that it is better to give a good sermon by another man than a bad one of your own. Well, then, *say that it is not your own.* Every one knows that when a clergyman goes to the pulpit and gives out his text, and then proceeds with his sermon, the understanding is that he wrote that sermon for himself. If he did not write it, he is bound in common honesty to say so. But besides this, I deny the principle on which some justify the preaching of another man's sermon. I deny that it is better to give the good sermon of another than the middling one by yourself. Depend upon it, if you have those qualifications of head and heart that fit you for being in the Church at all, your own sermon, however inferior in literary merit, is the better sermon for you to give and for your congregation to hear; it is the better fitted to accomplish the end of all worthy preaching, which, as you know, is not at all to get your hearers to think how clever a man you are. The simple, unambitious instruction into which you have thrown the teachings of your own little experience, and which you give forth from your own heart, will do a hundred times more good than any amount of ingenuity, brilliancy, or even piety, which you may preach at

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second-hand,\* with the feeling that somehow you stand to all this as an outsider. If you wish honestly to do good, preach what you have *felt*, and neither less nor more.

But in no way of regarding the case can any excuse be found for persons who steal and stick into their discourses tawdry little bits of bombast, purple patches of thought or sentiment, which cannot be supposed to do any good to anybody, which stand merely instead of a little stolen gilding for the gingerbread which is probably stolen too. I happened the other day to turn over a volume of discourses (not, I am thankful to say, by a clergyman of either of the national churches), and I came upon a sermon or lecture\* on *Woman*. You can imagine the kind of thing it was. It was by no means devoid of talent. The writer is plainly a clever, flippant person, with little sense, and no taste at all. The discourse sets out with a request that the audience 'would kindly try to keep awake by pinching one another in the leg, or giving some nodding neighbour a friendly pull of the hair;' and then there is a good deal about *Woman*, in the style of a Yankee after-dinner speech in proposing such a toast. After a little we have a highly romantic description of a battle-field after the battle, in which gasping steeds, midnight ravens, spectral bats, moping owls, screeching vultures, howling night wolves appear. These animals are suddenly startled by a figure going about

with a lantern 'to find the one she loves.' Of course the figure is a woman; and the paragraph winds up with the following passage :—

Shall we go to her? No! Let her weep on. Leave her, &c. Oh, woman! God beloved in old Jerusalem! We need deal lightly with thy faults, if only for the agony thy nature will endure, in bearing heavy evidence against us on the day of judgment!

Now, my friend, have you read Mr. Dickens' story of *Martin Chuzzlewit*? Turn up the twenty-eighth chapter of that work, and in the closing sentence you may read as follows :—

Oh woman, God-beloved in old Jerusalem! The best among us need deal lightly with thy faults, if only for the punishment thy nature will endure, in bearing heavy evidence against us on the Day of Judgment!

I wonder whether the writer of the discourse imagined that by varying one of two words, and adopting small letters instead of capitals in alluding to the Last Day, he made this sentence so entirely his own as to justify him in bagging it without one hint that it was a quotation. As for the value of the property bagged, *that* is another question.

After thinking for a few minutes of the curious constitution of mind which enables a man to feel his vanity flattered when he gets credit to which he knows he is not entitled, as the plagiarist does, I pass away into the vast field of thought which is afforded by the contemplation of human vanity in



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general. The Ettrick Shepherd was wont to say that when he tried a new pen, instead of writing his name, as most people do, he always wrote Solomon's famous sentence, *All is vanity*. But he did not understand the words in Solomon's sense : what he thought of was the limitless amount of self-conceit which exists in human beings, and which hardly any degree of mortification can (in many cases) cut down to a reasonable quantity. I find it difficult to arrive at any fixed law in regard to human self-conceit. It would be very pleasant if one could conclude that monstrous vanity is confined to tremendous fools ; but although the greatest intellectual self-conceit I have ever seen has been in blockheads of the greatest density and ignorance ; and although the greatest self-conceit of personal attractions has been in men and women of unutterable silliness ; still, it must be admitted that very great and illustrious members of the human race have been remarkable for their vanity. I have met very clever men, as well as very great fools, who would willingly talk of no other matters than themselves, and their own wonderful doings and attainments. I have known men of real ability, who were always anxious to impress you with the fact that they were the best riders, the best shots, the best jumpers, in the world ; who were always telling stories of the sharp things they said on trying occasions, and the extraordinary events which were constantly befalling them. When a

clever man convinces this weakness, we must remember that human nature is a weak and imperfect thing, and try to excuse the silliness for the sake of the real merit. But there are few things more irritating to witness than a stupid, ignorant dunce, wrapped up in impenetrable conceit of his own abilities and acquirements. It requires all the beauty, and all the listlessness too, of this sweet summer day, to think, without the pulse quickening to an indignant speed, of the half-dozen such persons whom each of us has known. It would soothe and comfort us if we could be assured that the blockhead knew that he was a blockhead: if we could be assured that now and then there penetrated into the dense skull and reached the stolid brain, even the suspicion of what his intellectual calibre really is. I greatly fear that such a suspicion never is known. If you witness the perfect confidence with which the man is ready to express his opinion upon any subject, you will be quite sure that the man has not the faintest notion of what his opinion is worth. I remember a blockhead saying that certain lines of poetry were nonsense. He said that they were unintelligible: that they were rubbish. I suggested that it did not follow that they were unintelligible, because *he* could not understand them. I told him that various competent judges thought them very noble lines indeed. The blockhead stuck to his opinion with the utmost firmness. What was the


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use of talking to him? If a blind man tells you he does not see the sun, and does not believe there is any sun, you ought to be sorry for him rather than angry with him. And when the blockhead declared that he saw only rubbish in verses which I trust every reader knows, and which begin with the line—

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,

his declaration merely showed that he lacked the power to appreciate Mr. Tennyson. But I think, my thoughtful friend, you would have found it hard to pity him when you saw plainly that the poor blockhead despised and pitied you.

The conceit of the stolid dunce is bad, but the conceit of the brisk and lively dunce is worse. The stolid dunce is comparatively quiet: his crass mind works slowly; his vacant face wears an aspect of repose; his talk is merely dull and twaddling. But the talk of the brisk dunce is ambitiously absurd: he lays down broad principles: he announces important discoveries which he has made: he has heard able and thoughtful men talk, and he tries to do that kind of thing. There is an indescribable jauntiness about him, apparent in every word and gesture. As for the stolid dunce, you would be content if the usages of society permitted your telling him that he is a dunce. As for the brisk dunce, you would like to take him by the ears and shake him.



It is wonderful how ordinary, sensible persons, with nothing brilliant about them, may live daily in a comfortable feeling that they are great geniuses: if they live constantly amid a little circle of even the most incompetent judges, who are always telling them that they are great geniuses. For it is natural to conclude that the opinion of the people whom you commonly see is a fair reflex of the opinion of all the world; and it is wonderful how highly even a very able man will estimate the value of the opinion of even a very stupid man, provided the stupid man entertains and frequently expresses an immensely high opinion of the very able man. I have known a man, holding a somewhat important position for which he was grossly unfit, and for which every one knew he was grossly unfit; yet perfectly self-satisfied and comfortable under circumstances which would have crushed many men, because he was kept up by two or three individuals who frequently assured him that he was a very eminent and useful person. These two or three individuals acted as a buffer between him and the estimate of mankind at large. He received their opinion as a fair sample of the general opinion. He was indeed a man of very moderate ability; but I have known another of very great talent, who by the laudations of one or two old women was led to suppose that he possessed abilities of a totally different nature from those which he actually possessed. I do not mean higher

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abilities, but abilities extending into a field into which his peculiar talents did not reach. Yet no one would have been sharper at discerning the worthlessness of the judgment of the old women had it been other than very flattering to himself. Who is there that does not know that sometimes clever young men are bolstered up into a self-conceit which does them much harm with the outer world, by the violent admiration and flattery of their mothers, sisters, and aunts at home?

But not merely does the favourable estimate of the little circle in which he lives serve to keep a man on good terms with himself; it goes some way towards influencing the estimation in which he is held by mankind at large—so far, that is, as mankind at large know anything about him. I have known such a thing as a family whose several members were always informing everybody they met what noble fellows the other members of the family were. And I am persuaded that all this really had some result. They *were* fine fellows, no doubt; but this tended to make sure that they should not be hid under a bushel. I am persuaded that if half-a-dozen clever young men were to form themselves into a little association, each member of which should be pledged to lose no opportunity of crying up the other five members in conversation, through the press, and in every other possible way, this would materially further their success in life and the

estimation in which they would be held wherever known. The world would take them at the value so constantly dinned into its ear. When you read on a silver coin the legend *one shilling*, you readily take it for a shilling; and if a man walks about with *great genius* painted upon him in large red letters, many people will accept the truth of the inscription. Every one has seen how a knot of able young men hanging together at college and in after life can help one another even in a material sense, and not less valuably by keeping up one another's heart. All this is quite fair, and so is even the mutual praise when it is hearty and sincere. For several months past I have been possessed of an idea which has been gradually growing into shape. I have thought of getting up an association, whose members should always hold by one another, be true to one another, and cry one another up. A friend to whom I mentioned my plan highly approved it, and suggested the happy name of the MUTUAL EXALTATION SOCIETY. The association would be limited in number: not more than fifty members could be admitted. It would include educated men in all walks of life; more particularly men whose success in life depends in any measure upon the estimation in which they are commonly held, as barristers, preachers, authors, and the like. Its purposes and operations have already been indicated with as much fulness as would be judicious at the

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present juncture. Mr. Barnum and Messrs. Moses and Son would be consulted on the details. Sir John Ellesmere, ex-solicitor-general and author of the *Essay on the Arts of Self-Advancement*, would be the first president, and the general guide, philosopher, and friend of the Mutual Exaltation Society. The present writer will be secretary. The only remuneration he would expect would be that all the members should undertake, at least six times every day, to make favourable mention of a recently published work. Six times a day would they be expected to say promiscuously to any intelligent friend or stranger, 'Have you read the *Recreations of a Country Parson*? Most wonderful book! Not read it? Go to Mudie's and get it directly'—and the like. For obvious reasons it would not do to make public the names of the members of the association; the moral weight of their mutual laudation would be much diminished. But clever young men in various parts of the country who may desire to join the society, may make application to the Editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, enclosing testimonials of moral and intellectual character. Applications will be received until the First of April, 1861.

I wonder whether any real impression is produced by those puffing paragraphs which appear in country newspapers about some men, and which are written either by the men themselves or by their

near relatives and friends. I think no impression is ever produced upon intelligent people, and no permanent impression upon any one. Still, among a rural population, there may be found those who believe all that is printed in a newspaper; and who think that the man who is mentioned in a newspaper is a very great man. And if you live among such, it is pleasant to be regarded by them as a hero. The Reverend Mr. Smith receives from his parishioners the gift of a silver salver: the county paper of the following Friday contains a lengthy paragraph recording the fact, and giving the reverend gentleman's feeling and appropriate reply. The same worthy clergyman preaches a charity sermon: and the circumstance is recorded, very fully, the eloquent peroration being given with an accuracy which says much for the perfection of provincial reporting—given, indeed, word for word. Now it is natural to think that Mr. Smith is a much more eminent man than those other men whose salvers and charity sermons find no place in the newspaper: and Mr. Smith's agricultural parishioners no doubt think so. A different opinion is entertained by such as know that Mr. Smith's uncle is a large proprietor in the puffing newspaper; and that he wrote the articles in question in a much warmer strain than that in which they appeared, the editor having sadly curtailed and toned them down. In the long run, all this quackery does no good. And



indeed long accounts in provincial journals of family matters, weddings and the like, serve only to make the family in question laughed at. Still, they do harm to nobody. They are very innocent. They please the family whose proceedings are chronicled; and if the family are laughed at, why, they don't know it.

And, happily, that which we do not know does us no harm: at least, gives us no pain. And it is a law, a kindly and a reasonable law, of civilised life, that when it is not absolutely necessary that a man should know that which would give him pain, he shall not be told of it. Only the most malicious violate this law. Even they cannot do it long: for they come to be excluded from society as its common enemies. One great characteristic of educated society is this: it is always under a certain degree of *Restraint*. Nobody, in public, speaks out all his mind. Nobody tells the whole truth, at least in public speeches and writings. It is a terrible thing when an inexperienced man in Parliament (for instance) blurts out the awkward fact, which everybody knows, but of which nobody is to speak except in the confidence of friendship or private society. How such a man is hounded down! He is every one's enemy. Every one is afraid of him. No one knows what he may say next. And it is quite fit that he should be stopped. Civilised life could not otherwise go on. It is quite right

(when you calmly reflect upon it) that the county paper, speaking of the member of Parliament, should tell us how this much-respected gentleman has been visiting his constituents, but should suppress a good deal of the speech he made, which the editor (though of the same politics) tells you frankly was worthy only of an escaped lunatic. Above all, it is fit and decent that the very odd private life and character of the legislator should be by tacit consent ignored even by the journals most opposed to him. It is right that kings and nobles should be, for the most part, spoken of in public as if they actually were what they ought to be. It is something of a reminder and a rebuke to them : and it is just as well that mankind at large should not know too much of the actual fact as to those above them. I should never object to calling a graceless duke *Your Grace* : nor to praying for a villanously bad monarch as *our most religious and gracious King* (I know quite well, small critic, that *religious* is an absurd mistranslation : but let us take the liturgy in the sense in which ninety-nine out of every hundred who hear it understand it) : for it seems to me that the daily recurring phrases are something ever suggesting what mankind have a right to expect from those in eminent station ; and a kindly determination to believe that such are at least endeavouring to be what they ought. No doubt there is often most bitter rebuke in the names ! This law of Restraint

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extends to all the doings of civilised men. No one does anything to the very utmost of his ability. No one speaks the entire truth, unless in confidence. No one exerts his whole bodily strength. No one ever spoke at the very top of his voice, unless in mortal extremity. Unquestionably, the feeling that you must work within limits curtails the result accomplished. You may see this in cases in which the restraint of the civilised man binds him no longer. A man delirious or mad needs four men to hold him : there is no restraint keeping in his exertions ; and you see what physical energy can do when utterly unlimited. And a man who always spoke out in public the entire truth about all men and all things, would inspire I know not what of terror. He would be like a mad Malay running a muck, dagger in hand ! If the person who in a deliberative assembly speaks of another person as his *venerable friend*, were to speak of him there as he did half an hour before in private, as an *obstructive old idiot*, how people would start ! It would be like the bare bones of the skeleton showing through the fair covering of flesh and blood.

The shadows are lengthening eastward now ; the summer day will soon be gone. And looking about on this beautiful world, I think of a poem by Bryant, in which he tells us how, gazing on the sky and the mountains in June, he wished that when his

time should come, the green turf of summer might be broken to make his grave. He could not bear, he tells us, the idea of being borne to his resting-place through sleety winds, and covered with icy clods. Of course, poets give us fanciful views, gained by looking at one side of a picture: and De Quincey somewhere states the opposite opinion, that death seems sadder in summer, because there is a feeling that in quitting this world our friend is losing more. It will not matter much, friendly reader, to you and me, what kind of weather there may be on the day of our respective funerals; though one would wish for a pleasant, sunshiny time. And let us humbly trust that when we go, we may find admission to a Place so beautiful, that we shall not miss the green fields and trees, the roses and honeysuckle of June. You may think, perhaps, of another reason besides Bryant's, for preferring to die in the summer time; you remember the quaint old Scotch lady, dying on a night of rain and hurricane, who said (in entire simplicity and with nothing of irreverence) to the circle of relations round her bed, 'Eh, what a fearfu' nicht for me to be fleein' through the air!' And perhaps it is natural to think it would be pleasant for the parted spirit, passing away from human ken and comfort, to mount upwards, angel-guided, through the soft sunset air of June, towards the country where suns never set, and where all the days are summer days.

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But all this is no better than a wayward fancy ; it founds on forgetfulness of the nature of the immaterial soul, to think that there need be any lengthened journey, or any flight through skies either stormy or calm. You have not had the advantage, I dare say, of being taught in your childhood the catechism which is drilled into all children in Scotland ; and which sketches out with admirable clearness and precision the elements of Christian belief. If you had, you would have been taught to repeat words which put away all uncertainty as to the intermediate state of departed spirits. ‘The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do IMMEDIATELY pass into glory.’ Yes ; IMMEDIATELY ; there is to the departed spirit no middle space at all between earth and heaven. The old lady need not have looked with any apprehension to going out from the warm chamber into the stormy winter night, and flying far away. Not but that millions of miles may intervene ; not but that the two worlds may be parted by a still, breathless ocean, a fathomless abyss of cold dead space ; yet, swift as never light went, swift as never thought went, flies the just man’s spirit across the profound. One moment the sick-room, the scaffold, the stake ; the next, the paradisaical glory. One moment the sob of parting anguish ; the next the great deep swell of the angels’ song. Never think, reader, that the dear ones you have seen die, had far to go to meet God

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after they parted from you. Never think, parents who have seen your children die, that after they left you, they had to traverse a dark solitary way, along which you would have liked (if it had been possible) to lead them by the hand, and bear them company till they came into the presence of God. *You did so*, if you stood by them till the last breath was drawn. *You did* bear them company into God's very presence, if you only stayed beside them till they died. The moment they left you, they were with Him. The slight pressure of the cold fingers lingered with you yet; but the little child was with his Saviour.

## CONCLUSION.

AND now, friendly reader, who have borne me company so far, your task is ended. You will have no more of the RECREATIONS OF A COUNTRY PARSON. Yet do not be alarmed. I trust you have not seen the writer's last appearance. It is only that the essays which he hopes yet to write, will not be composed in the comparative leisure of a country clergyman's quiet life. And not merely is it still a pleasant change of occupation, to write such chapters as those you have read: but the author cannot forget that to them he is indebted for the acquaintance of some of the most valued friends he has in this world. It was especially delightful to find a little sympathetic public, whose taste these papers suited; and to which they have not been devoid of profit and comfort. Nor was it without a certain subdued exultation that a quiet Scotch minister learned that away across the ocean he had found an audience as large and sympathetic as in his own country; and a

kind appreciation by the organs of criticism there, which he could not read without much emotion. Of course, if I had fancied myself a great genius, it would have seemed nothing strange that the thoughts I had written down in my little study in my country manse, should be read by many fellow-creatures four thousand miles off. But then I knew I was not a great genius: and so I felt it at once a great pleasure and a great surprise. My heart smote me when I thought of some flippant words of depreciation which these essays have contained concerning our American brothers. They are the last this hand shall ever write: and I never will forget how simple thoughts, only sincere and not unconsidered, found their way to hearts, kindly Scotch and English yet, though beating on the farther side of the Great Atlantic.

After all, a clergyman's great enjoyment is in his duty; and I think that, unless he be crushed down by a parish of utter misery and destitution, in which all he can do is like a drop in the ocean (as that great and good man Dr. Guthrie tells us he was), the town is to the clergyman better than the country.

- The crowded city, when all is said, contains the best of the race. Your mind is stirred up there, to do what you could not have done elsewhere. The best of your energy and ability is brought out by the never-ceasing spur.



Yet you will be sensible of various evils in the city clergyman's life. One is the great evil of overwork. You are always on the stretch. You never feel that your work is overtaken. The time never comes, in which you feel that you may sit down and rest : never comes, at least, save in the autumnal holiday. It is expedient that a city clergyman should have his mind well stored before going to his charge : for there he will find a perpetual drain upon his mind, and very little time for refilling it by general reading. To prepare two sermons a week, or even one sermon a week, for an educated congregation (or indeed for any congregation), implies no small sustained effort. It is not so very hard to write one sermon in one week ; but it is very hard to write thirty sermons in thirty successive weeks. You know how five miles in five hours are nothing : but a thousand miles in a thousand hours are killing. But every one knows that the preparation for the pulpit is the least part of a town clergyman's work. You have many sick to visit regularly : many frail and old people who cannot come to church. You have schools, classes, missions. And there is the constant effort to maintain some acquaintance with the families that attend your church, so that you and they shall not be strangers. I am persuaded that there ought to be at least two clergymen to every extensive parish. For it is not expedient that

the clergy should have their minds and bodies ever on the strain, just to get through the needful work of the day. There is no opportunity, then, for the accumulation of some stock and store of thought and learning. And one important service which the clergy of a country ought to render it, is the maintenance of learning and general culture. Indeed, a man not fairly versed in literature and science is not capable of preaching as is needful at the present day. And when always overdriven, a man is tempted to lower his standard : and instead of trying to do his work to the very best of his ability, to wish just to get decently through it.

Then, as for other men, they have the great happiness of knowing when their work is done. When a lawyer has attended to his cases, he has no more to do that day. So when the doctor has visited his patients. But to clerical work there is no limit. Your work is to do all the good you can. There is the parish : there is the population : and the uneasy conscience is always suggesting this and that new scheme of benevolent exertion. The only limit to the clergyman's duty is his strength : and very often that limit is outrun. Oh that one could wisely fix what one may safely and rightly do ; and then resolutely determine not to attempt any more ! But who can do that ? If your heart be in your work, you are every now and then knocking yourself up.

And you cannot help it. You advise your friends prudently against overwork : and then you go and work till you drop.

And a further evil of the town parish is, that a great part of your work is done by the utmost stretch of body and mind. Much of it is work of that nature, that when you are not actually doing it, you wonder how you can do it at all. When you think of it, it is a very great trial and effort to preach each Sunday to a thousand or fifteen hundred human beings. And by longer experience, and that humbler self-estimate which longer experience brings, the trial is ever becoming greater. It is the utmost strain of human energy, to do that duty fittingly. You know how easily some men go through their work. It is constant and protracted ; but not a very great strain at any one time : there is no overwhelming nervous tension. I suppose even the Chief Justice, or the Lord Chancellor, when in the morning he walks into Court and takes his seat on the bench, does so without a trace of nervous tremour. He is thoroughly cool. He has a perfect conviction that he is equal to his work ; that he is master of it. But preaching is to many men an unceasing nervous excitement. There is great wear in it. And this is so, I am persuaded, even with the most eminent men. Preaching is a thing by itself. When you properly reflect upon it, it is very solemn, responsible, and awful work. Not

long since, I heard the Bishop of Oxford preach to a very great congregation. I was sitting very near him, and watched him with the professional interest. I am much mistaken if that great man was not as nervous as a young parson, preaching for the first time. He had a number of little things in the pulpit to look after: his cap, gloves, handkerchief, sermon-case: I remember the nervous way in which he was twitching them about, and arranging them. No doubt that tremour wore off when he began to speak; and he gave a most admirable sermon. Still, the strain had been there, and had been felt. And I do not think that the like can recur week by week, without considerable wear of the principle of life within. Now, in preaching to a little country congregation, there is much less of that wear: to say nothing of the increased physical effort of addressing many hundreds of people, as compared with that of addressing eighty or ninety. It is quite possible that out of the many hundreds, there may not be very many individuals of whom, intellectually, you stand in very overwhelming awe: and the height of a crowd of a thousand people is no more than the height of the tallest man in it. Still, there is always something very imposing and awe-striking in the presence of a multitude of human beings.

And yet, if you have physical strength equal to your work, I do not think that for all the nervous anxiety which attends your charge, or for all its

constant pressure, you would ever wish to leave it. There is a happiness in such sacred duty which only those who have experienced it know. And without (so far as you are aware) a shade of self-conceit, but in entire humility and deep thankfulness, you will rejoice that God makes you the means of comfort and advantage to many of your fellow-men. It is a delightful thing to think that you are *of use*: and, whether in town or country, the diligent clergyman may always hope that he is so, less or more.

THE END.

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